

**PORT OF BENTON  
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
September 13, 2023**

**A. CALL TO ORDER:** The regular monthly meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. at the Walter Clore Wine & Culinary Center, 2140 Wine Country Road, Prosser, Washington.

**PRESENT:** Commissioner Christy L. Rasmussen; Commissioner Lori Stevens; Commissioner Roy D. Keck; Executive Director, Diahann Howard, PPM®, PPX®; Port Attorney, David Billetdeaux; Director of Real Estate, Teresa Hancock; Public Information Officer, Summers Miya; Director of Facilities & Operations, Ron Branine; Airport Manager, Quentin Wright; Director of Finance, Jeff Lubeck; Senior Accountant, Veronica Serna; Scott Keller, Community Member; Tom Glover, City of Prosser; Neal Ripplinger, Prosser Economic Development Association; John-Paul Estey, Prosser Chamber of Commerce; Melinda de Santo, Historic Downtown Prosser Association; Sam Teete

**The following attendees attended via remote communications:** Contract Specialist, Sheri Collins; Director of Marketing, Wally Williams, Ashley Garza; Bryan Condon, Century West Engineering; Wendy Culverwell, Tri-City Herald

The Commission meeting was noticed as required by RCW 42.30.070.

**B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Commission President Christy Rasmussen led those present in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

**C. CONSENT AGENDA:**

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission approving the agenda for the September 13, 2023 Commission meeting, approval of minutes from the August 9, 2023 Commission meeting, approval of minutes from the August 21, 2023 special Commission meeting, approval of vouchers and certifications, including payroll, for the month of August totaling \$1,125,748.14, approval of project vouchers and certifications for the month of August totaling \$5,110.52.

**D. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

There were no comments from the public.

**E. PUBLIC HEARING**

Commission President Christy Rasmussen opened the public hearing at 8:35 a.m.

1. For the purpose of Receiving Public Comment Concerning Declaring Property Excess to the Future Needs of the Port and the Advisability of Potential to Sell, Lease, Transfer or Otherwise Exchange Real Property and Improvements Owned by the Port and the City of Richland

Port Counsel David Billetdeaux explained that this item would amend the Comprehensive Plan of Harbor Improvements and would declare sections of property surplus in north Horn Rapids and Richland Business Park and would therefore make the land available for sale, exchange, or other transfer and additionally, would amend the Comprehensive Plan of Harbor Improvements to reflect the

acquisition of real property and/or improvements from the City of Richland.

The property was displayed to the Commission and public.

Commissioner Christy Rasmussen asked if there was any public comment concerning this item.

There were no comments.

Commission President Christy Rasmussen closed the public hearing at 8:38 a.m.

## **F. ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

1. Resolution 23-30, A Resolution Amending the Comprehensive Plan of Improvements and Declaring Real Property Surplus in North Horn Rapids and Richland Business Park

**A motion was made by Commissioner Roy Keck, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission approving the amendment of the Comprehensive Plan of Improvements and declaring real property surplus in North Horn Rapids and Richland Business Park.**

2. Welcome and Update from Tom Glover, City of Prosser

City of Prosser manager Tom Glover greeted the Commission and expressed appreciation to the Port for their support and partnership, particularly for providing a temporary space for the Prosser Police Station while Prosser works toward securing a permanent location.

Glover added that the City is also currently leasing space from the county for the city hall as a temporary fix to the situation.

Glover noted that a community session was held in June as the November bond issue related to a permanent location for the police station and city hall failed.

Glover added that the City continues to work toward a general consensus and review with the counsel with a possible discussion at the January meeting. Glover added that a likely lease extension would take place in the future with the port, as the City still needs time to design and build once city approval is received.

Glover noted that the new police chief has reorganized the structure and included new positions, including a deputy police chief and corporals, which help with oversight and duties. Glover noted that staffing is expensive, but they continue to build in a better hierarchy and fill any gaps.

Glover stated that at the city council meeting held the evening prior, there was discussion related to public parks and individuals using the parks to sleep, which is common in larger cities. Glover added that the city is looking into code changes as they do not want the issue to continue. Glover noted that the city is looking at City of Richland's ordinance for guidance.

Glover announced that there is an interim school superintendent who has revised agreements to include an agreement between school and the pool and fields, which has become a nice partnership.

Glover stated that the City has been successful with their grant writer and is moving forward with the purchase of flock cameras through grant programming in addition to a \$100k mower that will be used in large parks and open spaces.

Glover added that the grant and capital requirements includes the downtown entrance way sign, which must be completed by 2025.

Glover noted that the improvements to Old Empire Highway will be completed in the fall, adding that improvements include new sidewalks and curbing. Glover stated that the entrance way at Benton PUD has improved greatly.

Glover recognized a number of recent community events, including National Night Out, which is a very popular event that featured a dunk tank where the Chief of Police participated, and Glover added that he also participated.

Glover noted that the States Day Parade took place recently, recognizing Commission President Christy Rasmussen's participation and adding that this parade is the longest parade in central Washington.

Glover added that the Balloon Rally is coming up and concluded with a note that city staff is working on the 2024 budget.

### 3. Welcome and Update from John-Paul Estey, Prosser Chamber of Commerce

Prosser Chamber of Commerce executive director John-Paul Estey commented on Prosser's new police chief, recognizing that the chief is very involved with the community. Estey also thanked Commission president Christy Rasmussen for participating and attending so many community events. Estey added that the new superintendent is also very engaged and the buy-in and involvement is much appreciated and a great thing for the community.

Estey noted that he appreciates the port for all the assistance with events, including sponsorships and attendance. Estey added that 1,400 people attended Scottish Fest, which is an all-day family event featuring Mary Queen of Scots and Black Feather Broadsword Academy. Estey added that he is looking forward to next year.

Estey stated that 800 people attended the Art Walk and Wine Gala and 1,200 attended the Beer & Whiskey Festival, adding that both of these events take place within four hours and both took place with very hot temperatures. Estey recognized his appreciation of the port maintenance crew.

Estey noted that the Prosser Wine Network is looking into adding another event next summer and the Pacific Northwest Mustang Club is hosting their fall show in Vintners Village on October 1, adding that this event has taken place at Columbia Crest for the last 30 years. Estey stated that the new location is more accessible for participants and attendees and expect 190-200 cars and a lot of spectators. Estey added that this event is a great draw to the community and proceeds are donated to Meals & Wheels and the local VFW.

Estey announced that the Prosser community float received 1<sup>st</sup> place in the float builders category at the Lilac Parade and 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the lighting category. Estey added that they have retired the semi tractor trailer for hauling and are working on building a toy hauler that will be pulled with a 1-ton pickup and funds for this project come from a grant, plus \$17k from the Chamber, which is a good community investment and will be used for many years.

Estey noted that there is a local alpaca group who are offering farm tours and Estey noted that the Chamber is working with the farmers on an agreeable tour schedule.

Estey added that Hops Direct is another possible tour option, as area hops are a hidden gem for the region.

Estey stated that the Bubbles & Bites event will be taking place at the Clore Center on November 11, adding that 12 wineries have already signed up to showcase their sparkling wines.

### 4. Welcome and Update from Neal Ripplinger, Prosser Economic Development Association

Prosser Economic Development Association executive director Neal Ripplinger greeted the Commission.

Ripplinger thanked Commission President Christy Rasmussen for attending the recent

Leadership Prosser graduation.

Ripplinger stated that since he last presented to the Commission, Leadership Prosser participated in Ag Day, Healthcare and Social Services, Business and Industry with tours of area wineries and businesses, Government and Utilities with visits to Benton PUD, courthouse and WSU IAREC.

Ripplinger provided an update on the community entranceway sign capital budget request, stating that the sign is intended for the gravel area in the front of Love's Truck Stop and will allow for promotion of community events, emergency information and no advertising with LED boards. Ripplinger added that the addition of this sign will beautify an area that historically catches garbage.

Ripplinger provided an update on the Mustang Business Plan, which has partnered with Prosser School District for the past 12 years to foster young entrepreneurs.

Ripplinger added that the program has brought in experts and speakers in marketing, business finances and common hurdles. Ripplinger stated that the students learn how to create business plans as well as lessons in real world financials. Ripplinger noted that all participants receive a free t-shirt and top three received a cash reward.

Ripplinger recognized the opportunity for Prosser and Vintners Village to host American Cruise Lines, adding that he worked with area businesses to acquire proposals to present. Ripplinger noted that 2-5 motorcoaches a week may be added to the 2024 itinerary and he, and the area businesses will continue to wait for updates.

Ripplinger recognized the upcoming Mustang Club Car Show coming to the Village on October 1<sup>st</sup>.

Ripplinger stated the Prosser, WA Jobs continues to grow, which benefits local businesses. Ripplinger added that the Business Resources Initiative is considering future printed materials and a newsletter.

Ripplinger added that the new \$112M hospital project is on track for a spring 2025 opening.

Ripplinger added that PEDa has partnered with the Port on the OCOchem project, which will add a portable power station in Vintners Village. Ripplinger explained that the OCOchem process includes the recapture of CO<sub>2</sub>, turns into formic acid, tanked, turn into hydrogen, which is then turned into electricity. Ripplinger noted that this is a first of its kind project and will be a huge draw to attract to Vintners Village.

Ripplinger provided an update on the Creative District application, stating that this started in the second quarter and there are a limited number of districts located throughout Washington.

Ripplinger thanked Port executive director Diahann Howard, Commissioner Lori Stevens and Commissioner Christy Rasmussen for attending the recent meeting and tour with the ArtsWA representative.

Ripplinger noted that there is plenty in Prosser to move forward as an ideal candidate for a creative district and this will stimulate and attract businesses.

Ripplinger announced that the PEDa Annual Meeting was held on May 3 at the PUD.

Ripplinger updated that there has been conversation about transit service to Prosser Memorial Hospital, which would run from Wine Country Road with additional new stops, including a Prosser Transit Hub stop.

Ripplinger stated that Prosser real estate is neck and neck with the Tri-Cities.

Ripplinger added that he appreciates the continued Port support and feels the Port is a tremendous partner to PEDa.

## 5. Welcome and Update from Melinda De Santo, Historic Downtown Prosser Association

Historic Downton Prosser Association director Melinda De Santo announced that highlighted the B&O tax project, which keeps tax money in Prosser. De Santo noted that through this program, over \$750k has stayed in the community. De Santo stated that \$350k of this money was put toward beautification of downtown, with over \$200k in façade improvements. De Santo added that this is a major asset to the community and also allows for continuation of the Depot refresh project, which has included a new courtyard, removal of the old deck, landscaping this fall which includes a pergola that will become as a 3<sup>rd</sup> place gathering spot and be used for community events.

De Santo recognized that Prosser comes together to work together, including work on the Creative District application. De Santo added that Ripplinger is the chair of the Economic Vitality Committee.

De Santo added that B&O taxes allows for events such as the Girls Derby Day and also a new event, the Christmas Tree Lighting, which will take place on December 1 from 5 – 7 p.m. De Santo stated that the tree lighting will take place near the Depot and is family friendly and community-orientated with Santa photo opportunities, cocoa, commemorative mugs that are being sold as a raffle where the winner will light the tree. De Santo added that there are carolers planned, a toy drive, food drive, stage, dancers, entertainment.

Commissioner Christy Rasmussen stated that there is no grass growing under the feet of any organization in Prosser.

Rasmussen added that the States Day Parade was such a great day and offered such a sense of community, was family friendly. Rasmussen stated that she has become incredibly fond of the Prosser events.

Rasmussen recognized the farmers' market, highlighting its beautiful setting near playgrounds, businesses and so much community.

Rasmussen added that embracing of high school leadership is so incredible and applauds all Prosser partners for their work and dedication to the community.

## 6. Resolution 23-31, A Resolution of the Port of Benton Commission Regarding Travel Policies and Procedures

Port Counsel David Billetdeaux stated that the current travel policy was questioned by the state auditor, as it was missing current statute language.

Billetdeaux noted that the updated policy clearly identifies how to book a flight, breaks down meal and expense reimbursement and provides a detailed chart of what and when things are reimbursable.

Billetdeaux clarified that the updated policy provides Commission with added flexibility as it has added per diem reimbursement opportunity for in state and out of state travel.

Billetdeaux added that the Port wishes to comply with all federal, state and local laws governing employee travel and Resolution 14-02 would therefore be repealed with the acceptance of Resolution 23-31.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission approving Resolution 23-31, a resolution of the Port of Benton Commission regarding travel policies and procedures.**



7. Resolution 23-32, A Resolution of the Port of Benton Commission Governing the Issuance of Charge Cards and the Payment of Charge Card Expenses for Travel and Other Expenses

Port Counsel David Billetdeaux explained that Resolution 23-32 goes hand-in-hand with the old policy and State Auditor requirements.

Billetdeaux noted that this resolution outlines acceptable vs. unacceptable expenses.

Billetdeaux added that if there are any issues related to Port-assigned charge cards, any and all issues should be reported immediately.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Roy Keck, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission approving Resolution 23-32, a resolution of the Port of Benton Commission governing the issuance of charge cards and the payment of charge card expenses for travel and other expenses.**

8. Resolution 23-33, A Resolution Amending Resolution 23-23

Port Counsel David Billetdeaux clarified that Resolution 23-23 was passed a few meetings ago as it was thought that all invoices had been turned in for this project. Billetdeaux noted that another invoice was received after the initial resolution passed and this resolution would accept all work completed by Booth & Sons Construction for the original White Bluffs Archive and Storage Facility project.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission approving Resolution 23-33, a resolution amending Resolution 23-23.**

9. Resolution 23-34, A Resolution of the Port of Benton Relating to a Disbursement Agreement for the Use of Rural County Capital Funds Between Benton County and the Port of Benton

Executive Director Diahann Howard explained that Benton County has previously agreed to distribute certain funds received from the State of Washington that have been deposited in its Rural County Capital Funds. Howard added that .09 funds have previously been allotted for projects in the Richland Industrial Center.

Howard noted that the Port is asking to move forward for up to \$1,000,000 request of .09 funds and more information will be discussed in Executive Session. Howard added that approving Resolution 23-34 allows the Port to plan and be nimble when moving forward with acquisition of an asset.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Roy Keck, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission approving Resolution 23-34, a resolution of the Port of Benton relating to a disbursement agreement for up to \$1,000.000 in requested use of rural county capital funds between Benton County and the Port of Benton.**

10. Resolution 23-35, A Resolution of the Sale of Real Property and Authorizing a Purchase and Sale Agreement with HiLine Engineering, LLC for \$46,500.00

Director of Real Estate Teresa Hancock explained that this resolution is an administrative fix related to the sale of 39 acres to HiLine Engineering in 2017.

Hancock added that the resolution ensures that final adjustments are made correctly concerning Port property near this property.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission approving Resolution 23-35, a resolution of the sale of real property and authorizing a purchase and sale agreement for \$46,500.00 with HiLine Engineering, LLC.**

## **G. INFORMATION REPORTS**

### **1. Grants Update**

Executive Director Diahann Howard pointed out that the grants report was included in the meeting packet and highlighted the following:

Item 3, Innovation Cluster Accelerator Program Application – Fiscal year is 9/30/2023. Can extend for reimbursement of Port time related to contracts, attorney fees, director salary. Possible 3-6 month extension. Will apply for second round, but will be significantly less than first round.

The Port has formed a VERTICAL board consisting of Jeff Witt, Framatome; Fred Hughes, Fluor and Ken Langdon, Energy Northwest. A press release will be shared in the coming weeks.

Item 7, Railroad Improvements, FRAP Grant – Moving forward.

Item 8, Consolidated Rail Infrastructure & Safety Improvement (CRISI) – Updated letter of support from Senator Murray's office. Expect to hear very soon.

Executive Director Diahann Howard will be traveling to DC soon and will take the time to meet with local and state offices related to rail and 2579 Stevens Drive.

Executive Director Diahann Howard shared that the grant writer is looking into private grants for phase II of the White Bluffs project and will also put forward a congressional ask.

Item 16, Tech Hubs – EDA will designate 20 tech hubs nationwide tied to CHIPS and Science Act. Expected announcement to take place this fall.

Airport Manager Quentin Wright stated that the CARB board approved the Port's application last week to move forward with the purchase of the Moe building, 1845 Terminal Drive. Wright added that this is an exciting move and strategic move for the future of the airport, with goals that this building will be the future face of the airport with an updated conference room and pilot's lounge.

Wright added that a press release will be issued in the coming days and the hope is to close on the building by the end of 2023.

## **H. COMMISSIONER REPORTS/COMMENTS**

Commissioner Lori Stevens stated that she attended the ATI and Tree Top tours and while both were so different, both facilities continue to grow and bring jobs to the community.

Commissioner Stevens added that guest speaker, Asja Suljic recently joined the Prosser Economic Development Association meeting and provided a detailed presentation on area labor stats.

Commissioner Stevens added that she participated in the online Coffee with Karl related to Energy Forward Alliance as well as the Economic Vitality meeting related to Prosser's efforts to get the Creative

District going.

Commissioner Roy Keck stated that he attended the Hanford Communities Tour and received an update on the progress with the cleanup efforts and the intensive Department of Energy focus on cleanup.

Commissioner Christy Rasmussen announced that she attended the peer exchange in Los Alamos highlighting three parks with one mission.

Rasmussen stated that Los Alamos is located on a twisty, two-lane road and was home to a workforce of 40k during WWII and now is a community of 19,000 with 14K jobs associated with Los Alamos national lab. She stated the topics discussed reaffirm our efforts around the Manhattan National Park and its importance to ongoing research, education, and tourism for the community. We need to continue this important work with our partner jurisdictions.

Rasmussen noted that she attended the Oppenheimer movie and was able to tour inside the fence, which was a fantastic experience.

Rasmussen added that she attended the Congressional Update luncheon, Prosser's farmers' market, Benton City Daze parade, Prosser States Day parade and other recent Prosser events.

## **I. DIRECTOR REPORTS/COMMENTS:**

### **1. AIRPORTS**

Airport Manager Quentin Wright announced that he had the opportunity to visit the Yakima air terminal recently, which he was able to fly into.

Wright reminded the Commission that the Balloon Rally was taking place September 22-24 at Prosser Airport.

Wright announced that the Commemorative Air Force Squadron is planning an event to show off the Fairchild PT/23 and military vehicles with Pasco Tower and Richland Police Department planning to attend. Wright added that the event will take place near the DHL building on the south side of the airport, which is multi-use.

### **2. FACILITIES & OPERATIONS**

Director of Facilities & Operations Ron Branine stated that the facilities team has been busy this month with budget prep and meetings, but has been making great progress with getting more curbs painted.

Branine added that the team is prepping for the upcoming balloon rally, as well as performing several property inspections. Branine noted that several grinder pumps have failed across many properties, including the airport, 2345 Stevens Drive, Crow Butte and Clore will be getting their pump inspected. Branine added that there have been several domestic water leaks at Crow Butte recently.

Branine announced that Crow Butte will close in 30 days for the season, adding that forecast revenue is up 1.33% in reservations, guest forecast is up 6.12%, guest return rate up 97.65%, occupancy



forecast up 4.53%, reservations up 5.07% and kiosks are showing 305 transactions in the past 30 days, which is down from 510 in the previous 30 days.

Branine stated that the facilities team has continued to meet with McKinstry to get preliminary ideas on where to start with the 2579 building. Branine added that it is going to take a lot of money to accomplish projects there and they are exploring grants and other types of loans to get funding before the Port locks itself into one plan. Branine added that the Port is also gathering numbers internally to handle some of the items that must be addressed soon.

Executive Director Diahann Howard announced that the engineer and construction team have been working with Midvale on the SR 240 accident, noting that Midvale will be replacing damaged equipment this Thursday.

Howard reminded the Commission that the SR 240 crossing project will replace the rail crossing and rail signal at this location, which is funded by a National Highway Freight Program grant from WSDOT for \$865k and a minimum Port match of \$135k.

Howard added that based on recent bids, the Port believes the total project will be closer to \$1.3M, so the Port match may increase to \$435k. Howard added that KPFF has been selected and has provided an acceptable scope of work and budget, adding that WSDOT is still approving KPFF's contract and construction is planned for mid-2024.

Howard updated that Condon has completed the installation of 1,200 new ties and ballast on the track, adding that this project was funded entirely by the Port. Howard reminded the Commission that the intent was to raise the track speeds to 10 mph following the installation of new ties, but upon inspection, inspectors are concerned about the condition of the track in the curve just north of Duportail and the curve north of Van Giesen. Howard noted that track speeds have increased to 10 mph from Richland junction to Duportail but remain at 5 mph from Duportail north. Howard added that the team is working with inspectors over the next couple of weeks to address the track conditions and will keep Commission apprised of any updates.

Howard added that HDR has performed survey work for upcoming FRAP projects, which is in the amount of \$1.03M with a \$250k Port match, \$1.28M total. Howard reminded the Commission that this work will make repairs at Airport Way railroad crossing, Saint Street railroad crossing and will install signal electronics at Kingsgate Way Railroad crossing. Howard stated that HDR has performed surveying on this project and has begun design work.

Howard announced that when the City of Richland installed the Duportail railroad crossing signal components, they were required to satisfy TCRY on the operations of the signal and during construction, WSDOT required modifications to the railroad signal controller. Howard added that these modifications were not made satisfactorily for several reasons and the Port continues to work with WSDOT on corrections. Howard added that it looks like a redesign of the controller and installation of components will be needed.

### **3. REAL ESTATE**

Director of Real Estate Teresa Hancock stated that she has been taking care of numerous sale inquiries and thanked Diahann Howard and Quentin Wright on their work on the 1845 Terminal Drive sale.

Hancock added that she has several items reserved for Executive Session.

#### **4. MARKETING:**

Public Information Officer Summers Miya informed the Commission that Director of Marketing Wally Williams was online for the Commission meeting.

Miya noted that she has been working with Williams on the fall newsletter, comp plan updates, strategic plan updates and he has also been working on updating signs.

Miya stated that the team is waiting to hear back from American Cruise Lines on a good time for them to meet with the Port and Prosser partners related to the 2024 tour season.

Miya added that she has been working with several groups who are interested in utilizing the Clore Center for their educational event, including WSU IAREC and WSU Enology.

Miya added that she participated in a walk-through of Clore with Engineer, Roger Wright, Airport Manager, Quentin Wright and Columbia Basin IT to resolve some of the issues with the Clore networks.

Miya updated that Entrepreneurial Awards nominations are due next week and a meeting to review nominations and vote on the Sammy is scheduled for 9/28.

Miya announced that she is working on her preparation to attend the USS Triton reunion in October, where she will present on current Triton activities, future plans, secure oral histories and ask for letters of support to secure funding for phase II.

Miya noted that she participated in the USACE/TREC field tour lunch and also assisted with hosting Washington State Department of Commerce to present on VERTical. Miya added that she then met with Commerce the next day to overview Port initiatives and activities.

Miya added that she has participated in various meetings and tours, including Framatome, Port of Whitman APEL tour, investor meeting and also participated in the tour of the Tree Top facility.

Miya stated that she has been working with Underground Creative to get continually improve website function and tracking capabilities.

Miya added that she attended the recent Vintners Village meeting where the upcoming Mustang Car Club show was discussed in length and also enjoyed a morning on the rail in an original 1950s Hanford speeder car, which toured her out to the Wye and back.

#### **5. FINANCE DIRECTOR:**

Director of Finance Jeff Lubeck provided a PowerPoint presentation of the financial status report.

Lubeck announced that the state audit will start on 9/11.

Lubeck provided a staffing update, noting that a temp is filling and covering the AP role currently and the permanent new hire is scheduled to start on 9/25 and former Accounting Clerk Liz Renz who moved out of state has been contracted to assist with training.

Lubeck provided a 2024 budget status update, which incorporates several large, late-breaking developments, but all is still on schedule and the budget will be presented at a much deeper level.

Lubeck noted that the 1:1 meetings with Commission is scheduled to begin next week.

Lubeck noted that the reserve study has been completed related to what the reserve level should be.

Lubeck provided a financial status report, noting that August 2023 cash is down \$526k compared to July 2023 due to annual payment for insurance coverage of \$568,526 and excluding that

payment, cash would be up over \$42k.

Lubeck highlighted that there were \$599,491 in cash receipts in August and \$1,125,748 in disbursements, which \$175k were associated with payroll and \$951k for Accounts Payable (A/P), reminding the Commission of the large insurance payment that went out. Lubeck added that there is currently \$60k in outstanding A/P.

Lubeck provided an overview of Accounts Receivable (A/R) over a 90 day period. Lubeck provided an update on the Voyager project, noting that Voyager was acquired to help manage property and lease management (billings, collections) and to support compliance of GASB 87.

Lubeck noted that Voyage started at the beginning of 2022, which required data entry of every single property, 200 leases. Lubeck added that the system went live 1/1/2023 which allowed for billings and receipts out of the system. Lubeck noted that on 9/6, the automated integration was completed and billings and cash receipts are now posted daily into the accounting system.

Lubeck thanked Senior Accountant Veronica Serna for all of her work and dedication in her role and to the Port of Benton.

## **6. PORT ATTORNEY:**

Port Attorney David Billetdeaux stated that the insurance RFP is out and is also working on the reserve study and archiving software RFPs.

Billetdeaux updated the Commission on recent conversation with WSDOT related to Berry's Bridge, which WSDOT believes the Port should pay for updating the structure, but when WSDOT moved under Department of Energy (DOE), it was never given back to DOE and stayed with WSDOT and statute clearly states that rail over or under a Washington state highway must be maintained by controller.

Billetdeaux stated that the Port will move forward with the best solution for the ICAP extension.

Billetdeaux added that there was one last item related to rail, noting that security camera footage has been valuable recently.

Executive Director Diahann Howard added that rail tie maintenance must be performed each year as an ongoing cost with the asset.

Commissioner Christy Rasmussen applauded the team for the work and dedication put into the rail, as the rail never should have gone to the condition that it did. Commissioner Rasmussen recognized how much the team has taken on to bring the rail back to an acceptable condition.

## **7. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:**

Executive Director Diahann Howard stated that the current WPPA legislative agenda does not include anything for economic development and therefore plans to reach out to Washington Economic Development Association.

Howard added that she participated in the recent tour of the Tree Top facility, where they highlighted the amount of natural gas they use in the facility.

Howard noted that there has been recent conversation around workforce with Port of Seattle and Maritime Blue adding that there are smaller ports that will also be highlighted during the WPPA annual meeting as case studies.

Howard stated that she also attended the peer exchange at Los Alamos, noting that visiting the sites helps to reconsider the local strategy and it is apparent that Richland needs to step up the game.

Howard added that the next peer exchange will be held in Richland May 6-8 and the ECA conference focus will be new nuclear.

Howard noted that she attended ATI's phenomenal tour, which highlighted the amazing work they are doing.

Howard added that she also attended the full Hanford site tour.

Howard stated that the Port hosted the Port of Whitman for a meeting with APEL that concluded with a tour of the facility. Howard added that APEL is a wonderful asset to north Richland and there is a clear divider on what APEL can handle and what the Port can handle as far as lab tenants.

Howard noted that she attended the Creative District meeting where discussion ensued on ways to support creative districts and how the strategic plan can get implemented successfully into the community.

Howard noted that the Port held a meeting with American Rock, which is a great partnership and American Rock will transfer land back to the Port in the coming months, which will be presented at a future meeting.

Howard informed the Commission that VERTical hosted UK investors along with TRIDEC, Energy Northwest and workforce, who are interested in possibly investing in north Richland.

Howard announced that the Port hosted a Framatome event with global leadership of Framatome where significant announcements were made, but waiting on the City of Richland to proceed.

Howard stated that she will be meeting with TRIDEC via CESA related to the Energy Forward Alliance strategy.

Howard stated that she has been asked to speak at a future AAPA event related to new nuclear and industry and will be inviting industry partners to join her.

Howard reminded the Commission of the upcoming ATV tour of the 1,341 acres on October 4.

Howard announced that Atlas Agro continues to make progress and tentative plans have them breaking ground in 2024-2025.

Howard added that she is reserving items related to real estate (Clore, Richland Business Park, Richland Industrial Center, Benton City, Vintners Village) for Executive Session.

**J. EXECUTIVE SESSION:** The regular Commission meeting was recessed at 10:53 a.m. and an Executive Session was convened at 11:00 a.m. to discuss real estate and personnel for 45 minutes. It was noted that if any action was required, the regular meeting would reconvene and bring forward any item at that time.

At 11:45 a.m., it was announced that Executive Session would need another 20 minutes.

**K. ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 12:04 p.m. with an announcement that a special Commission Budget Workshop would be held on Monday, October 9, 2023 at 8:30 a.m. at the Port of Benton Commission meeting room, located at 3250 Port of Benton Blvd., Richland, Washington. The next regular Commission meeting would be held on Wednesday, October 18, 2023 at 8:30 a.m. at the Port of Benton Commission meeting room, located at 3250 Port of Benton Blvd., Richland, Washington.



Lori Stevens  
Commission Secretary