

**PORT OF BENTON
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
November 8, 2023**

A. CALL TO ORDER: The regular monthly meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. at the Port of Benton Commission Meeting Room, 3250 Port of Benton Boulevard, Richland, Washington.

PRESENT: Commissioner Christy Rasmussen, Commissioner Lori Stevens; Commissioner Roy D. Keck; Executive Director, Diahann Howard, PPM®, PPX®; Port Attorney, David Billetdeaux, PPM®; Director of Real Estate, Teresa Hancock; Public Information Officer, Summers Miya; Director of Facilities & Operations, Ron Branine; Airport Manager, Quentin Wright; Construction Project Manager, Bryan Bell; Director of Finance, Jeff Lubeck; Director of Marketing, Wally Williams; Bryan Condon, Century West Engineering

The following attendees attended via remote communications: Contract Specialist, Sheri Collins; Senior Accountant, Veronica Serna; Accounting Specialist, Julia Mora; Ashley Garza; Joshua Lott, Anderson Perry & Associates; Clif Dyer, Richland, WA; Wendy Culverwell, Tri-City Herald

The Commission meeting was noticed as required by RCW 42.30.070.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Commission Secretary Lori Stevens 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 November 8, 2023 Commission meeting, approval of minutes from the October 18, 2023 Commission meeting, approval of vouchers and certifications, including payroll, for the month of October totaling \$1,094,057.75, approval of project vouchers and certifications for the month of October totaling \$2,778.02.

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. 2024 Port of Benton Budget

Director of Finance Jeff Lubeck provided a review of the 2024 budget, including a review of the budget timeline, major pending items and any changes since the October 9, 2023 budget workshop.

Lubeck stated that the proposed timeline will be met and the budget and tax assessment will be submitted to Benton County by November 22, 2023, reminding the Commission that these items are due to the county by November 30, 2023.

Lubeck highlighted the major pending items include the land swap with City of Richland, as timing is uncertain (2023 vs. 2024 item), the cash requirement is uncertain at this time and under the assumption that this item will be complete in 2024 with no/minimal cash.

Lubeck added that the other pending item is the property tax revenue, as only the third preliminary valuation has been received as of this meeting, with the final valuation to be approved by the Benton County Commissioners in January 2024. Lubeck stated that although the final numbers have not yet been received, a material change is not anticipated.

Lubeck reviewed the minor changes to the budget since it was presented at the October 9, 2023 budget workshop.

Description	From	By	To
Decrease in Property Tax Income	\$3,036,784	(\$59,061)	\$2,977,723
Decrease in Property Tax Rate	0.31853205290	(0.00623921211)	0.31229284079
Increase in 2023 Carryover	\$50,000	\$100,000	\$150,000
Increase in Professional Services	\$1,644,930	\$50,000	\$1,694,930
Net Surplus/Deficit	\$77,958	(\$9,061)	\$68,897

Lubeck stated that the third preliminary property valuation was received from Benton County, which noted that new construction property valuation is slightly down, there is a slight decrease in property tax revenue and is subject to final valuation adjustments by the county.

Lubeck added that there is an increase in carry-forward from 2023 of \$100k due to the \$275k sale of the Benton City building in December.

Lubeck added that the increase of the \$50k in the professional services area includes the addition of \$25k for an economic impact study and \$25k for community engagement.

Lubeck noted that these minor changes reduced the projected 2024 Net Surplus by \$9k and the presented budget is still balanced.

Lubeck pointed out that the November tax resolution includes a 1% increased adjustment.

Lubeck added that the property tax rate decreased by 6% from the prior year, whereas the preliminary budget presented noted a 4% reduction.

Lubeck noted that property tax rates have decreased by 16% since 2019, adding that the preliminary budget noted a 15% reduction.

Lubeck stated that other than the items specifically mentioned, there have been no substantial changes made to the budget since it was presented at the budget workshop.

Commissioner Rasmussen stated that the community appreciates the transparent nature that this budget has been presented.

Commissioner Stevens added that the community also appreciates the decreased tax rates.

2. 2024 Comprehensive Plan of Harbor Improvements

Executive Director Diahann Howard announced that no changes have been made to the Comprehensive Plan of Harbor Improvements since it was presented for review at the October 18, 2023 Commission meeting.

Commission President Christy Rasmussen closed the public hearing at 8:42 a.m.

F. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Resolution 23-45, 2024 Port of Benton Budget; Resolution 23-46, Port's 2024 Comprehensive Plan of Harbor Improvements Adoption; Resolution 23-47, Certifying the Port's 2023 Levy for 2024 Collection

Commission President Christy Rasmussen asked if there was any further discussion on these items?

There was no further discussion.

A motion was made by Commissioner Roy Keck, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission approving the 2024 budget and 2024 Comprehensive Plan of Harbor Improvements with the changes discussed today, and Certifying the Port's 2023 Levy for 2024 Collection.

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 7 – Tech Hubs. This application was not successful and this item will be removed from the grants report.

H. COMMISSIONER REPORTS/COMMENTS

Commissioner Lori Stevens announced that she attended the Tri-City Regional Chamber State of the Cities monthly luncheon as well as the Visit Tri-Cities annual meeting.

Commissioner Roy Keck stated that he attended the American Association of Ports Authority annual meeting, where there seemed to be an abundance of enthusiasm related to off-shore wind, which he found disappointing. Commissioner Keck added that the enthusiasm seemed be especially strong from the west coast ports.

Commissioner Keck noted that there are plenty of additional options, particularly with the recent clean energy initiatives.

Commissioner Keck added that he was thrilled to be in attendance for David Billetdeaux's Professional Port Manager PPM® graduation and congratulated David again on this remarkable achievement.

Commissioner Christy Rasmussen stated that she attended the Energy Northwest Public Power Forum regarding new nuclear and the clean energy needs for the future.

Commissioner Rasmussen added that she attended the Zeno Power announcement, which fits in really well with the clean up to clean energy theme.

Commissioner Rasmussen added that the Visit Tri-Cities annual meeting video was fabulous and appreciated the numerous shots highlighting Port of Benton.

Commissioner Rasmussen stated that she recently met with Wanda Munn, who was involved in regional nuclear development for years, adding that Munn is excited that the Port has stepped up and is moving forward with clean energy and advanced manufacturing initiatives.

Commissioner Rasmussen added that she had the opportunity to facilitate a group of running start students to highlight why ports are important to the economy.

I. DIRECTOR REPORTS/COMMENTS:

1. AIRPORTS

Airport Manager Quentin Wright highlighted the progress of the kiosk that is currently under construction at Prosser Airport with recent photos. Wright pointed out that the kiosk is being constructed in a central location and reminded the Commission that the kiosk will support the Fly Washington passport program.

Wright stated that Century West has provided the Port with a graphic depicting how Prosser Airport could look in the future, including a proper runup area and the addition of helipads.

Wright added that the depictions of future hangar sites is market-driven, adding there is advanced manufacturing interest in the southwest corner at Prosser Airport.

Wright added that things are going really well in Prosser with room to expand and grow.

Consultant Bryan Condon added that the focus on the southwest corner is indeed based on the expectation levels and current demand.

Condon added that the depictions allow for a clear picture when working with potential clients.

2. FACILITIES & OPERATIONS

Director of Facilities & Operations Ron Branine announced that there is a current vacancy at the 3100 George Washington Way facility and the team has almost completed the turnover.

Branine informed that the move of the salt operations from 2579 Stevens to the recently vacated Salk facility is ongoing and will be completed in the coming weeks.

Branine stated that the annual crane inspection is in process and the team has been busy preparing vehicles for winter as well as near constant leaf pickup throughout the entire district.

Branine noted that the work order system training continues.

Branine announced that Crow Butte Park has officially closed for the season and by December there will not be any Port representative on the island full time. Branine added that Port staff will begin visiting the park a few times a week.

Branine added that there were 82 kiosk transactions at the park within the past 30 days.

Executive Director Diahann Howard provided an update on rail operations.

Howard stated that Columbia Rail is currently making repairs to the Wye track, installing 100 new ties due to the wide gauge found during the Holland Inspection. Howard added that they continue to clean up the rail area around 2579 Stevens Drive, including the old inventory, which will be available to sell for surplus once thoroughly organized.

Howard noted that the Center Parkway project is completed, open and functioning well.

Howard provided an update on the City of Richland's pathway construction project, noting that the city has completed construction of the pathway adjacent to SR 240 and is in use.

Howard added that the SR 240 crossing project is part of the National Highway Freight Program grant and will replace the rail crossing and rail signal at this location. Howard added that this crossing has basalt under the crossing and Project Construction Manager, Bryan Bell recently stayed up overnight to assist with a pre-project in preparation of future work.

Howard added that it is likely this project will take place mid-2024 and the design portion has been completed.

Howard stated that the 2023-2025 FRAP grant in the amount of \$1,030,000, with a \$250k Port match will focus on repairs at the Airport Way airport crossing, Saint Street crossing and Kingsgate Crossing. Howard added that the team is moving forward with plans to complete these improvements in 2024, as HDR has performed surveying. Howard noted that the team will likely bid this project in January 2024.

Howard updated on projects in the Richland Innovation Center, adding that work here includes streetlight and sidewalk installation, noting that the Port is waiting on Anderson Perry to separate drawings into different tasks.

Howard provided an update on the American Rock Products (ARP) special use permit, adding that ARP is currently mining this additional area of the lease and will likely take all of 2024 to complete. Howard added that this area is planned for future inter-modal use.

3. REAL ESTATE

Director of Real Estate Teresa Hancock announced that she has been working on three current real estate transactions, which all seem to be proceeding as normal.

Hancock added that she continues to focus on ongoing delinquent notices and is working with legal as she proceeds forward.

Hancock stated that there are two tenants of concern as the zoning prohibits their current use and she is working with tenants on transitioning out of Port property.

Hancock added that she continues to work with City of Prosser's Steve Zetz on the Enodav plans for the property in Vintners Village.

Hancock stated that she wanted to provide a heads up that Atkins would be vacating the 2345 Stevens facility in early 2024, as their new facility located at the corner of George Washington Way / University is nearing completion. Hancock added that there are no concerns about backfilling the space at 2345 and expects to have that completed in the first quarter of 2024.

4. MARKETING:

Director of Marketing Wally Williams stated that he has been assisting with the Opportunity Happens Here video interview projects.

Public Information Officer Summers Miya provided a presentation highlighting the 2023 Entrepreneurial Awards winners, which were announced at the Richland Rotary event held the previous day, November 7, 2023.

- Atomic Escape Rooms – Nominated by TRIDEC
- LiveGrow Bio – Nominated by Fuse
- TETO Eco Wash – Nominated by Tri-Cities Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Sister to Sister on the Ave. – Nominated by Port of Benton
- Summer's Hub of Kennewick – Nominated by Tri-City Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Sonar Insights – Nominated by Benton-Franklin Workforce Development Council

Miya added that the 2023 Sam Volpentest (Sammy) Leadership Award was presented to WSU Tri-Cities Chancellor Sandra Haynes.

Miya provided a review of the USS Triton reunion she attended October 26-28, 2023. Miya stated that she was the keynote speaker at the Saturday evening event and she was honored to provide an update on the preservation of USS Triton, giving updates on what Triton is up to today, its significance and connection to Richland, WA, the continued work to provide broader access to more tours and events, highlighting the growth of tours each year.

Miya provided an update on the Triton page on the Port website, which now features a list of each Veteran who served on Triton during its commission. Miya added that she took several hard copies of this list in a brochure format, which were well received by the group.

Miya stated that she provided an overview of current materials and plans for future materials. Miya added that she included information on Phase II of the White Bluffs STEM Center, where Triton will be a showcase piece. Miya stated that she asked the group to sign the letter of support she had with her, which was very well received.

Miya added that she also asked to be considered for the donation of Triton artifacts for possibly future exhibits and special events.

Miya added that she told the group she would be happy to work with any volunteers on Naval archiving requests.

Miya announced that she presented a rendering of the commemorative Triton wall, which lists each name of those who served, adding that the Veterans and families were extremely excited about this possibility.

Miya expressed gratitude for the opportunity to attend the USS Triton reunion, to meet the Veterans, hear their stories and continue the mission related to the growth of Triton's future in Richland. Miya added that she was able to obtain four oral history interviews while attending the reunion which will be transcribed.

Miya thanked Director of Marketing, Wally Williams on working so hard to complete some of the materials that she took to the reunion.

Miya added that the Port is a sponsor of the Historic Downtown Prosser Association Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony, which will take place on December 1, adding that the Port has a toy donation box in the lobby, which needs to be returned to HDPa by December 1.

5. FINANCE DIRECTOR:

Director of Finance Jeff Lubeck provided a financial status report, noting that the current audit was underway, at approximately 70% complete.

Lubeck announced that the reserve study was underway and interviews have been scheduled with Port Management and Commissioner Keck.

Lubeck commented on the cash report, reporting that it was not changed from the prior month since the bank statements have not yet been received by the Benton County Treasurer. Lubeck reminded the Commission that reports from the treasurer are not available until November 9, 2023. Lubeck noted that he does not expect any material changes in cash balance from the prior month..

Lubeck reviewed October cash disbursements, which totaled \$1,094,058 including \$210k in payroll related costs, \$884k in accounts payable, which included the closures of some of the rail projects. Lubeck noted that there is currently \$160k in outstanding accounts payable.

Lubeck provided an overview of current tenant A/R information.

6. PORT ATTORNEY:

Port Attorney David Billetdeaux expressed gratitude to Executive Director Diahann Howard for nominating him for the Professional Port Manager PPM® program, and to the Commission for their support with the program, which he recently completed.

Billetdeaux stated that he has been working on some audit related issues and has been working on the disadvantaged business policy, which is required for federal and state grants.

Billetdeaux added that he is also working on updating all current job descriptions within the office to make sure they fit current duties.

7. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Executive Director Diahann Howard stated that she moderated the New Nuclear event at Richland Public Library on October 18, 2023, which was very well attended.

Howard added that she has also been involved in recent AAPA legislative discussions.

Howard announced that she has attended the recent Tri-Cities Hispanic Chamber luncheon, Regional Chamber's State of the Cities, Visit Tri-Cities annual meeting, Energy Northwest's Public Power Forum, Zeno Power announcements event.

Howard added that she has also had numerous 1:1 meetings, including a meeting with Benton City Mayor Linda Lehman, where an update on Benton city projects was provided.

Howard stated that she hosted the Entrepreneurial Awards event with TRIDEC's Karl Dye.

Howard noted that PNWA staff Anthony and Neil would be stopping by the office later that afternoon.

Howard added that as COVID-19 is no longer a concern for public meetings, there may be revisions to the Port Commission agenda.


Howard added that an Executive Session would be needed for 15 minutes to discuss real estate and personnel.

J. EXECUTIVE SESSION: The regular Commission meeting was recessed at 9:21 and it was announced that an Executive Session would begin at 9:25 a.m. to discuss items related to personnel and real estate for 15 minutes.

K. BREAK: Teleconference and Zoom options were terminated after an announcement was made that the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting would be held on Wednesday, December 13, 2023 at 8:30 a.m. at the Port of Benton Commission meeting room, located at 3250 Port of Benton Blvd., Richland, Washington.

L. TOUR OF RICHLAND AIRPORT: Open to public attendance. No action was taken during or after the public tour of Richland Airport.

M. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 10:42 a.m.


Lori Stevens
Commission Secretary