

**PORT OF BENTON
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
June 12, 2024**

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 located at 3250 Port of Benton Blvd., Richland, Washington.

PRESENT: Commissioner Scott D. Keller; Commissioner Lori Stevens; Commissioner Roy D. Keck

PORT STAFF PRESENT: Diahann Howard, Jeff Lubeck, Quentin Wright, Summers Miya, Ron Branine, Angela Saraceno-Lyman, Julia Mora, Audrey Burney

ALSO PRESENT: John O’Leary, Gravis Law; Council Member Shayne VanDyke, City of Richland; Bryan Condon, Century West Engineering; Mike Wiemers, Karyn Wiemers

The following attendees attended via remote communications: Sheri Collins; Ashley Garza; Cassie Hammond; Joshua Lott, Anderson Perry

The Commission meeting was noticed as required by RCW 42.30.070.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Ron Branine 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 June 12, 2024 Commission meeting, approval of minutes from the May 14, 2024 Commission meeting, approval of minutes from the June 3, 2024 special Commission meeting, approval of vouchers and certifications, including payroll, for the month of May totaling \$894,760.49 and approval of Resolution 24-23, to cancel warrant no. 083133, which was printed in errors.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT:

There were no comments from the public.

E. PUBLIC HEARING

Commission President Scott Keller opened the public hearing at 8:33 a.m.

1. Receive public comment on the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program for Years 2025-2030

Executive Director Diahann Howard explained that all public entities prepare annual Six-Year Transportation Program. The purpose of the plan is to identify transportation needs related to projects that are likely to be constructed within the next year period, noting that in order to receive state or federal funding, the project is required to be included on the list.

Howard highlighted the list of projects included in the current program.

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Council Member Shayne Van Dyke stated that City of Richland is in the process of reviewing their own Six-Year TIP, which is posted on their website. Council Member requested a Port overview on the Port TIP at a future meeting.

Commission President Scott Keller closed the public hearing at 8:39 a.m.

F. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Resolution 24-24, A Resolution of the Port of Benton Approving the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program for the Years 2025-2030 Inclusive

Executive Director Diahann Howard stated that board approval of the Port of Benton Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program for the years 2025-2030 is required. Once approved, it will be presented to the Benton-Franklin Council of Governments.

A motion was made by Commissioner Roy Keck, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission approving Resolution 24-24, approving the six-year transportation improvement program for the years 2025-2030 inclusive.

2. Approval of Department of Commerce Contract for Tie Replacement Project \$1,221,500.00

Executive Director Diahann Howard stated that the \$1.2 million was received through the state of Washington thanks to the efforts of Senator Matt Boehnke.

Howard explained that the funds will allow the Port to bring 3,000 new ties into the rail system.

Howard added that the 3,000 ties and the upcoming railroad crossing projects will allow the rail speeds to increase while also stabilizing the rail.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission approving Department of Commerce contract for a tie replacement project for \$1,221,500.00.

F. INFORMATION REPORTS:

1. Marketing Update

Public Information Officer Summers Miya provided an overview on recent marketing and communication highlights.

Miya reviewed the focus areas – North Horn Rapids, Vintners Village, USS Triton STEM tourism.

Primary Activities – Increase inquiries, create videos or write articles to highlight success stories of port district companies/people, increase USS Triton sail tours, major project communications, expand speaking engagements, enhance website.

Miya overviewed the goals and progress of each focus area.

Miya reviewed recent materials created along with ads placed.

Miya overviewed recent website updates, including the launching of the Opportunity Happens Here page, which highlights several port businesses and updates and additions to the USS Triton page.

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Miya reviewed recent articles about or mentioning the port, recent news releases and overviewed all presentations given thus far.

Miya reviewed highlights from the year so far, including Economic Development Week posts, Opportunity Happens Here launch, Prosser Community Awards banquet, KNDU Pastries with PIO event, Puget Sound Naval Shipyard tour, WPPA communications committee lunch & learn, Seattle Airport advertising in quarter three.

Miya noted that the port is supporting planning efforts for a Hanford Reach National Monument 25th anniversary event, which will take place summer 2025.

Miya pointed out the visual display set up in the room, displaying recently donated USS Triton artifacts, explaining that the donations have come in from Veterans and family members of Veterans who attended the reunion, or have heard of the Port's efforts with USS Triton education. Miya described the recent donations, commenting on the generosity and support of Triton Vets.

2. Grants Update

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

Item 4 – Railroad Improvements, Freight Rail Assistance Program (FRAP) Grant received through the state, which is a grant, as well as a loan. The grant is funded mainly through a grant but is going out to bid with final contract approval coming back at the July Commission meeting.

Item 10 – Records Room Organization. The Port was one of the 25 applicants out of 122 submissions to receive this award and one of the few to be fully funded. Grant expected to be awarded in June with work to begin in July.

Item 13 – Port Electrification. New to the list. \$26 million at the state level. Port to go in with phase I request for power at barge.

Items 11 & 12 – Congressional Directed Spending Requests. Federal requests, or earmarks.

Airport Grant Updates

Airport Manager Quentin Wright provided an overview on current airport projects, including Prosser pavement rehab and electrical replacement and Richland hangar and taxi lane construction.

Wright provided an updated on FAA funding, including lack of funding available. Wright explained that pavement at Prosser is critical and available funding will go toward pavement repair before electrical replacement. Wright stated that a public meeting related to Prosser Airport projects would be held in Prosser on Wednesday, July 10 with more information to follow.

Wright provided updates on Richland Airport projects, including the hangar taxi lane project, which is seeing increased cost and FAA issues related to what the FAA is able to continue funding.

Wright provided an update on the pavement rehab project at Richland, stating that they are looking at August 19 – October 18 and highlighted the scope of the project. Wright explained that the crosswind runway 826 is under question from the FAA on whether this runway is eligible for funding due to winds favoring the main runway 119.

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Wright explained that the Port plans to provide nine years of wind data to the FAA and explore different options with Century West.

Century West Engineer, Bryan Condon provided an overview of Century West recommendations regarding the wind data related to runway 826, including requesting a meeting with Tom Richards out of the FAA office in Seattle and requesting a reassessment in a year.

Quentin Wright added that the Port is committed to looking into alternatives for pavement maintenance, including renting the equipment or partnering with other agencies to get the necessary work completed.

Wright added that the Richland Airport hosted a great community Young Eagles event last weekend, which hosted over 90 kids.

Wright added that both airports also offer critical support for lifesaving and firefighting aircraft.

Conversation ensued regarding the changes at FAA, including changes in leadership.

G. COMMISSIONER REPORTS/COMMENTS

Commissioner Lori Stevens announced that she attended the recent Agricultural Viability Conference hosted by WSU and the Washington Department of Agriculture as well as the Tri-City Regional Chamber legislative update luncheon.

Commissioner Scott Keller stated that he attended the Washington Public Ports Association (WPPA) spring meeting, Visit Tri-Cities board meeting, including a separate one-on-one with Visit Tri-Cities CEO Kevin Lewis. Commissioner Keller added that he also attended the recent Chamber legislative update luncheon.

Commissioner Roy Keck stated that he also attended the WPPA spring meeting, where it was announced that the upcoming Commissioners' Seminar would be held in Richland. Commissioner Keck added that he also attended the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association summer meeting in Clarkston.

Conversation ensued on the current aviation gas tax topic discussed in recent meetings.

Executive Director Diahann Howard informed the Commission that she would like to request that Port of Pasco executive director, Randy Hayden and the Regional Chamber present to the Commission on the Ag subcommittee group and efforts.

H. DIRECTOR REPORTS/COMMENTS:

1. FINANCE DIRECTOR:

Director of Finance Jeff Lubeck provided financial status report, highlighting the department's current focus points as:

- Washington State Department of Retirement Systems Pension Contribution Review for 2023
- 2024 Standard Financial Information Review

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- April 2024 Year-to-Date Financial Review

Lubeck noted that there has been no significant change in the month-ending cash trends, adding that a large wire will go out next week for the acquisition of 3110 Port of Benton Blvd, with reimbursement to follow, per the Benton .09 funds.

Lubeck highlighted Accounts Payable and Receivables, including receivables over 90 days.

Lubeck reviewed year-to-date operating revenues and expenses through April 30, 2024, highlighting where the actuals were better or worse than budgeted.

Lubeck reviewed budget actuals, clarifying that Crow Butte labor is coming in higher than budgeted, which is likely because the team is doing a better job at tracking where they are allocating their time.

Lubeck reviewed 2345 Stevens Drive turnover costs and professional services.

Lubeck stated that the Port is tracking on budget.

2. PORT ATTORNEY:

Contract Port attorney John O'Leary provided the Commissioners an update on a recent incident at Vintners Village over Memorial Day weekend, noting that because the incident was a public safety concern, it is possible that a policy will need to be adopted to address those issues going forward.

3. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Executive Director Diahann Howard announced that the purchase of 3110 Port of Benton Blvd. will close on Thursday, June 13 and complimented the team.

Howard announced that she attended the Ag Transportation Convention in Tacoma, where she made several great connections.

Howard noted that she had the opportunity to present on the intermodal facility to the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board.

Howard stated that the waterfront and barge RFPs have been completed and the team is in the process of contracting for each.

Howard noted that she has reached out to EDA regarding Clore and how many avenues are available to private operators per the grant requirements.

Howard announced that the Port of Benton has been designated by the US Maritime as an M-84 location, which will be an administrative function only and is not a financial obligation.

Howard provided an update on the lease modification with American Rock.

Howard added that she is working with Director of Governmental Affairs, Cassie Hammond on an upcoming Tribal Nuclear Caucus as well as a site selection visit next week. Howard added that she will be presenting at an AAPA electrification event later this month.

J. FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

Executive Director Diahann Howard reviewed a list of upcoming meetings and events and things to plan and coordinate, including establishing a regular attendee for the Richland Chamber of

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Commerce meetings and confirming the July 10, 2024 Commission date, which Commissioner Roy Keck will join remotely due to business travel.

K. EXECUTIVE SESSION: The regular Commission meeting was recessed at 10:02 a.m. and it was announced that an Executive Session would immediately commence at 10:03 a.m. for 5 minutes to discuss potential litigation.

The regular Commission meeting was reconvened at 10:09 a.m.

No action was required after the Executive Session.

L. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 10:09 a.m. with an announcement that the next Port of Benton Commission meeting would take place on Wednesday, July 10, 2024 at the Port of Benton Commission meeting room, 3250 Port of Benton Blvd., Richland.



Roy Keck
Commission Secretary