

**PORT OF BENTON  
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
July 10, 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 – Attended remotely

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

**ALSO PRESENT:** John O’Leary, Gravis Law; Council Member Shayne VanDyke, City of Richland; Bryan Condon, Century West Engineering; Jon Ray, Rest on High; Randy Hayden, Port of Pasco

**The following attendees attended via remote communications:** Sheri Collins; Ashley Garza; Joshua Lott, Anderson Perry; Jeff Losey, Tri-Cities Home Builders Association; Wendy Culverwell, Tri-City Herald; Holly Lynch, Keller Rohrback

The Commission meeting was noticed as required by RCW 42.30.070.

**B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Diahann Howard 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 revised agenda for the July 10, 2024 Commission meeting, approval of minutes from the June 12, 2024 Commission meeting, approval of (revised) vouchers and certifications, including payroll, for the month of June totaling \$2,680.872.29.**

**D. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

There were no comments from the public.

**F. ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

**1. Welcome and Update from Randy Hayden, Port of Pasco/Ag Council**

Port of Pasco Executive Director Randy Hayden provided an overview and update on the myTri 2030 Ag Innovation Center project, providing ag innovation examples.

Hayden reviewed the current ag innovation council members, vision, “what” and “how” and components of the feasibility study and location analysis currently underway.

**2. Relocation of Existing Easement – Richland Business Park**

Executive Director Diahann Howard provided an overview on the request for relocation of an existing easement located in the Richland Business Park, explaining that the property is next to

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American Rock.

Howard explained that the relocation of the easement benefits the port because it also opens up access to the rail loop and intermodal facility area.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Roy Keck, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission approving the relocation of an existing easement in the Richland Business Park.**

3. 2023 Freight Rail Assistance Program – Crossings Reconstruction Project Bid Award, \$1,143,151.70 to Railworks Track Systems

Executive Director Diahann Howard provided an overview on the project, stating that bids were received for the project, which includes Airport Way and Saint Street crossing, as well as the signal electronics at Kingsgate Way. Howard added that bids were received by June 18 and Railworks Track Systems was the low bidder at \$1,143,151.70.

Howard reminded the Commission that the base bid was selected to keep it as close to budget as possible.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission approving the 2023 Freight Rail Assistance Program – Crossings Reconstruction Project Bid Award, \$1,143,151.70 to Railworks Track Systems.**

4. 2023 Legislative Budget Appropriation – Approval of Department of Commerce Reimbursement Contract, \$1,212,500.00 and Schedule of Project Expenditures

Executive Director Diahann Howard explained that these funds are related directly from work that came from Senator Matt Boehnke and has taken a substantial amount of time and pre work to get under contract. Howard added that the port is pleased to see that the project is now moving forward.

Howard explained that the funding will assist with the install of up to 3,000 new ties on the system as well as ballast.

Howard requested Commission approval so authorization can move forward for HDR to begin work. Howard added that it is possible that the team will be requesting preauthorization to move forward with a pre-order of the ties, which will be ordered at cost and will be ready for installation between August and November.

Howard clarified that this item of business specifically approves the Department of Commerce reimbursement contract, \$1,212,500.00 and schedule of project expenditures.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission approving the Department of Commerce Reimbursement Contract, \$1,212,500.00 and Schedule of Project Expenditures**

## **F. INFORMATION REPORTS:**

### **1. Airports Update**

Airport Manager Quentin Wright informed the Commission that the date of no return has been reached regarding FAA project funding for Prosser Airport, which means that even if the port learned today that funding was possible, it would be too late in the year to go through the entire process and get any work done this year.

Wright explained that the port is moving forward on its own to get moving on some of the maintenance work. Wright noted that the team is moving forward with a scope of work for the needed maintenance work.

Wright added that he is expecting to receive the pavement maintenance offer for Richland Airport next week, adding that that project should start in August.

Wright reviewed additional funding possibilities for future airport projects.

### **2. Grants Update**

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

Item 1 – Richland Innovation Center Rural County Capital Funds  
Project formally closed out, completed. Project will be closed out and removed from the grants report.

#### **Item 7 – RAISE**

White Bluffs Southern Connection Rail – Project not selected. CRISI request remains active.

#### **Item 8 – Benton County .09**

Closed on 3110 Port of Benton Blvd. using this funding. Project closed out and will be removed going forward.

#### **Item 13 – Port Electrification**

\$26 million specific to ports available. Application submitted on July 8 related to barge facility. Requires 10% match for consideration in 2025 budget.

## **G. COMMISSIONER REPORTS/COMMENTS**

Commissioner Lori Stevens reviewed recent meetings and events she has attended including the Vine Institute kick-off for the Ag Innovation Center and the regular monthly meetings. Commissioner Stevens added that the Prosser Wine Gala and Art Walk is coming up in Prosser on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Roy Keck thanked the Port of Benton for supporting the return of Cool Desert Nights to the Richland community.

Commissioner Keck added that he attended the WPPA Finance conference, which provided some valuable and interesting seminars and information, including some extensive information provided by the aviation committee.

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Commissioner Scott Keller announced that he attended the Scottish Fest event in Prosser as well as the Benton REA elected leaders' luncheon, Port of Pasco tenant appreciation BBQ and Tri-City Regional Chamber monthly luncheon.

Commissioner Keller noted that the WPPA Commissioners Seminar is upcoming in Richland, where the Port of Benton Commissioners have been invited to welcome the group and participate in other activities and events.

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

### **1. FINANCE DIRECTOR:**

Director of Finance Jeff Lubeck noted that he attended the WPPA Finance Commerce, which Commissioner Keck had previously mentioned the aviation committee report related to airport finance and grant compliance. Lubeck noted that each Commissioner was provided with a copy of the presentation and briefed the Commission on the highlights of the report, including several assurances.

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

- Continuous improvement – Remote desktop deposit capability
- 2024 standard financial information review
- 2025 budget preparation overview

Lubeck reviewed the financial status report, noting that the decrease in June is due to timing of payments and receipts.

Lubeck noted that the reimbursement from the Benton County .09 funds were received on July 2, 2024.

Lubeck noted that there were \$1,229,548 in receipts received in June and \$2,674,500 in disbursements, including the \$1.5 million building acquisition.

Lubeck reviewed current accounts receivable, pointing out that the over 90-day column is at \$43,000, which the team recently had a successful meeting discussing processes going forward.

Lubeck reviewed the 2025 budget development process, overviewing the schedule and plan. Lubeck noted that efforts to schedule a 1:1 meeting with each Commissioner will start soon.

### **2. PORT ATTORNEY:**

Contract Port attorney John O'Leary explained that he is working on a general social media account for the port, as well as working on the final touches of the Richland land exchange agreement and the interlocal agreement with Richland pertaining to the Steptoe Street rail crossing.

O'Leary noted that he has items reserved for executive session related to potential litigation issues, as well as legal risks associated with rail-related issues, which Holly Lynch from Keller Rohrback will participating in.

### 3. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Executive Director Diahann Howard complimented Director of Governmental Affairs Cassie Hammond on her diligence and hard work with recent legislative visits and the recent event co-hosted with Energy Northwest where several tribes attended.

Howard introduced and welcomed Brandin Lopez, who most recently worked for Amazon, but previous to that spent many years with the City of Richland.

Howard reviewed recent meetings and events she has attended, including presenting at the American Association of Port Authorities on port electrification.

Howard thanked the team for their work on the recent rail information night and public meeting at Richland Public Library and recognized the public meeting related to Prosser Airport projects taking place that evening in Prosser.

Howard reviewed several recent projects the team is involved in related to Walter Clore, railroad and recent real estate closings and updates. Howard reviewed upcoming events and projects, including the upcoming tenant appreciation BBQ.

Howard stated that she was reserving one item for executive session related to real estate at Vintners Village.

### 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.

**K. EXECUTIVE SESSION:** The regular Commission meeting was recessed at 9:25 a.m. and it was announced that an Executive Session would immediately commence at 9:26 a.m. for 60 minutes to discuss potential litigation related to rail and real estate.

The regular Commission meeting was reconvened at 10:26 a.m.

No action was required after the Executive Session.

**L. ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 10:26 a.m. with an announcement that the next Port of Benton Commission meeting would take place on Wednesday, August 14, 2024, at the Port of Benton Commission meeting room, 3250 Port of Benton Blvd., Richland.

  
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Roy Keck  
Commission Secretary