

**PORT OF BENTON
SPECIAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
March 3, 2025**

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

PRESENT: Commissioner Scott D. Keller, Roy D. Keck

REMOTE COMMUNICATIONS: Commissioner Lori Stevens

PORT STAFF PRESENT: Diahann Howard, Jeff Lubeck, Quentin Wright, Summers Miya, Ron Branine, Brandin Lopez, Wally Williams, Cassie Hammond, Audrey Burney

ALSO PRESENT: John O’Leary, Gravis Law; Ashley Garza

The following attendees attended via remote communications: Jorge Celestino, Sheri Collins, Angela Saraceno-Lyman, Julia Mora, Bryan Bell, Teresa Hancock

The Commission meeting was noticed as required by RCW 42.30.070.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Brandin Lopez led those present in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. PUBLIC COMMENT:

There were no comments from the public.

D. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. 2024 Tie Installation Project – Authorization to Purchase \$90,000 in Supplies

Engineering & Capital Development Manager Brandin Lopez provided an overview of the 2024 Tie Installation Project, explaining the need for the amount of ballast rock needed to fill voids when taking elevation out of the track.

Lopez provided technical details related to the plans for the track updates and speeds.

Lopez explained ballast rock and its use, providing a visual representation of the quotes received and explaining how the quotes are calculated.

Lopez pointed out that the lowest bid received was from American Rock, just over \$80,000, and is requesting the Commission to approve \$90,000 to allow for a bit of flexibility.

Lopez added that the 2023 legislative budget appropriation grant, port project #PR00362, and port-matching funds will cover the cost of the purchase.

A motion was made by Commissioner Roy Keck, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission, authorizing the port to purchase up to \$90,000 in supplies for the 2024 Tie Installation Project.

2. Administrative Update

Public Information Officer requested that the May Commission date change from Wednesday, May 21 to Thursday, May 22, to accommodate for business travel for staff and Commission.

The Commission agreed that the date change would work.

Director of Finance Jeff Lubeck provided an update on the 2023 audit and 2024 year-end. Lubeck stated that there are a total of four job offers that were included in the 2025 budget, but wanted to make the Commission aware that the Port is planning to proceed with the hiring of three part-time seasonal Crow Butte employees, which is now required because they are no longer considered independent contractors. Lubeck added that the park will be supplemented with one volunteer camp host in the summer for 30-60 days, which will receive a small stipend of around \$500.

Lubeck added that the other position is the Business Operations position, noting that the records room grant has been fulfilled and the Port would like to move forward with the hiring of Jorge Celestino, who completed the records room grant project.

Lubeck noted that the Crow Butte positions and Business Operations position will total approximately \$90,000.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission, authorizing the additional positions at Crow Butte Park and the Business Operations position per the 2025 budget, for a total of \$90,000.

Brandin Lopez provided a brief update on the SR 240 rail crossing project, noting that the tentative date for the project is Thursday, May 29 – Monday, June 2. Once more has been determined and learned, full communication will be shared with the Commission and community. Lopez noted that the Port continues working with the City and state on their SR 240 project.

E. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 8.46 a.m. with an announcement that the next regular Port of Benton Commission meeting would be held at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, March 19, 2025, at the Clore Center, 2140 Wine Country Road, Prosser, Washington.



Roy D. Keck
Commission Secretary