

**PORT OF BENTON  
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
April 9, 2025**

**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 Blvd., Richland, Washington.

**PRESENT:** Commissioner Scott D. Keller, Commissioner Lori Stevens, Commissioner Roy D. Keck

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

**ALSO PRESENT:** John O'Leary, Gravis Law; Ashley Garza; Roger Wright; Pam Minelli, Tri-Cities C.A.R.E.S.; Paul Krupin, Tri-Cities C.A.R.E.S.; Dave Sharp, Tri-Cities C.A.R.E.S.; Karen Brun, Tri-Cities C.A.R.E.S.; Jon Ray, Rest on High; Wade Blagg, American Rock Products; Mike McBreen, American Rock Products; Clif Dyer; Sundance Aviation

**The following attendees attended via remote communications:** Sheri Collins; Julia Mora; Angela Saraceno-Lyman; Jorge Celestino; Bryan Condon, Century West Engineering; Wendy Culverwell, Tri-City Herald; Teresa Hancock; Jeff (No last name given)

The Commission meeting was noticed as required by RCW 42.30.070.

**B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Wally Williams led those present to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

**C. CONSENT AGENDA:**

It was requested that Item No. 9 be added to the Items of Business Section: Amendment to Real Estate and Purchase and Sale Agreement and the Development Agreement – DFP, LLC – Richland Business Park.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission approving the amended agenda for the April 9, 2025, Commission meeting, approval of minutes from the March 19, 2025, Commission meeting, and approval of vouchers and certifications, including payroll, for the month of March totaling \$517,362.35.

**D. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Clif Dyer of Sundance Aviation announced his support of the aviation-related events taking place at the airport on Saturday, May 31, 2025, noting that it will be a very busy day at the Richland Airport.

**E. ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

1. Welcome and Update from Tri-Cities C.A.R.E.S., Horse Heaven Hills Wind and Solar Project

Paul Krupin of Tri-Cities C.A.R.E.S. provided an overview and update on the Horse Heaven Hills Wind and Solar Project, noting that there are current legal battles and public involvement over turbine installations.

Krupin noted that this project is the largest wind project in the United States, spanning 25 miles. The project includes 222 499-foot turbines, 112 square miles, 100 miles of dirt roads, 20 miles of

transmission lines, 18 acres of lithium-ion battery storage. Each turbine ranges from 500-foot and 671-foot. 100,000 people live within six miles of the turbine area.

Krupin noted that there is a potential for 400-500 full-time jobs during construction, with only 20 permanent employees.

There is a 10-30% reduction in property values for 75,000 homes, an estimated \$4-6 billion impact.

There are environmental and safety concerns with impacts to wildlife, cultural properties and visual aesthetics. Firefighting aircraft operations will be hindered by turbine installations.

Krupin pointed out that the initial EIS process was challenged and the governor's remand led to revised recommendations against EIS findings.

Ongoing litigation costs are estimated between \$300,000 and \$400,000.

Krupin noted that Tri-Cities C.A.R.E.S. will continue with litigation and legal strategies, while fundraising to cover ongoing legal expenses and organizing public support and awareness events.

## 2. Welcome and Update from Jon Ray, Rest on High – Aviation Career Fair – Richland Airport

Jon Ray of Rest on High provided an update on the upcoming inaugural Aviation Career Day and Job Fair, which will take place at Richland Airport on Saturday, May 31 from 9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Ray reviewed the event mission: "Introduce Tri-City high school and college students to the vast opportunities for careers in the aviation industry and provide them with an opportunity to talk to industry experts about what the jobs entail and the career path for those jobs."

Ray introduced the aviation career opportunities beyond pilots and flight attendants, noting the goal to engage youth and local colleges in aviation sectors like engineering, data processing, EVTOL and UAS.

Ray stated that the event is free of charge and open to the public, with businesses asked to only provide their own sun shade. There will be UAS demonstrations, static displays, vendor presentations and the Young Eagles program will be on site.

Ray explained that he has been promoting the event through the local schools and colleges and working with local connections.

## 3. Resolution 25-13, Authorizing the Port of Benton to Proceed with the Shore Power Electrification Design Contract – Technology & Business Campus

Brandin Lopez requested authorization for the Port to sign a contract for the shore power and electrification design contract, reminding the Commission that this project is all covered by grant dollars. Lopez overviewed the project, noting that site security will be updated and fencing and lighting will be added to the site. These improvements will also open the door for possible future potential tourism boats to come up this far.

Lopez stated that the proposal received was for \$480,900 with an additional \$35,000 in possible change orders.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Roy Keck, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving Resolution 25-13, authorizing the Port of Benton to proceed with the shore power electrification design contract for \$480,900 with an additional \$35,000 in possible change orders. – Technology & Business Campus.**

4. Resolution 25-14, Authorizing the Sale of Real Property, 515 9<sup>th</sup> Street – Benton City

Real Estate Manager Audrey Burney provided an overview of the real property located at 515 9<sup>th</sup> Street in Benton City, which is the Subway building. Burney noted that it includes .2753 acres of property, 3,304 square-foot building.

Burney noted that in 2008, the Port paid \$150,000 for the property, in 2020 an appraisal was received for \$252,000. In November 2021, the Commission deemed the property excess to future port purposes by Resolution 21-51 to the Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Development, which the Comp Plan has since been reauthorized in 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025.

In October, 2023, a resolution was passed authorizing a sale of real property to Atomic Donut, LLC for \$275,000, which was not executed.

Burney overviewed the offer received:

- Jennifer Kaslow and Nishaant Isaar, operating as Kayaan, LLC, are the franchise owners of Subway.
- Subway is the tenant on the lease for this location and Kayaan, LLC is a subtenant under the Subway lease.
- Since 2006, they have owned and operated 13 franchise stores and currently own seven Subway stores.
- Initial investment of \$100,000.
- Plans to employ between 4 – 6 employees.
- Plan to look for a tenant to fill the available space in the building.
- Offered \$300,000 for the building and land.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving Resolution 25-14, authorizing the Port of Benton to proceed with the sale of real property located at 515 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Benton City.**

5. Welcome and Update from Wade Blagg and Mike McBreen, American Rock Products

Contract Engineer Roger Wright of RGW Enterprises provided a historical overview on the land north of 2579 Stevens Drive, which has been leased by American Rock since 2000. Wright noted that the area has been very successful for American Rock, which in turn has been a great project for the Port.

General Manager of American Rock Products, Wade Blagg, greeted the Commission, noting that he has been with the company since 2004 and has been happy with the great relationship between the port and American Rock.

Blagg overviewed the company, noting that there are 50 employees locally and over 100 at Inland Asphalt, which is a sister company. Blagg explained that at peak season, the company employs around 300 people locally. Blagg explained the operations, noting that American Rock is the #1 supplier



to the Hanford reservation and supplies 50% to local residential with a total of approximately 65% of commercial and industrial products in the Tri-Cities.

Blagg provided an overview on the rocks mined, noting that they have mined over 10 million tons and continue to invest.

Blagg reviewed investments, including water clarifier installation, overland conveyor system, along with future plans, including an expansion of mining operations, leasing additional land for development.

Mike McBreen, Vice President of American Rock, Northwest Region complimented the great partnership between the port and American Rock, including complimenting engineer Roger Wright. McBreen noted his appreciation to the port for the continued support of their operations.

6. 2579 Stevens Drive CERB – Intermodal Rail Presentation – Richland Business Park

Engineering and Capital Development Manager Brandin Lopez provided an update on the Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB) application for the Barnhart Crane facility located at 2579 Stevens Drive, stating that the new lease with Barnhart allows the Port to present at the May CERB meeting. Lopez added that following the May meeting, the Port will then approach the Economic Development Association (EDA) regarding additional funding, in addition to Benton County rural county capital .09 funding opportunity.

Lopez overviewed the aging building infrastructure and some of the plans for the remodel. A review of the funding sources was provided, including a timeline of the project phases.

Lopez provided some detail on each phase and what the project would include in each phase, pointing out that they are dealing with 1950s infrastructure and codes were much different then.

Lopez explained funding sources and the unknowns related to the project at this time.

7. 2579 Stevens Drive LED Lighting Project – Richland Business Park

Director of Facilities Ron Branine explained that this lighting project would finish out the lighting minus the Barnhart area at the 2579 Stevens Drive building, and there is less than a three-year return on investment. Branine noted that the approximate quote for the project is \$70,000.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving the 2579 Stevens Drive LED Lighting Project at \$70,000.**

8. Authorization to Award Contract with Impervious Coatings, LLC for \$67,709.70, Including Washington State Sales Tax, for the 2939 Richardson Roof Coating Project – Technology & Business Campus

Director of Facilities & Operations Ron Branine stated that this roof coating project is for the Westinghouse building, as it is aging out. Branine noted that a full replacement cost is approximately \$135,000, but this quote from Impervious Coating is a new spray-on technology and also provides a 10-year warranty and came in at \$67,709.70, including Washington State sales tax.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Roy Keck, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission, authorizing a contract with Impervious Coatings, LLC for \$67,709.70, including Washington State sales tax, for the 2939 Richardson Roof Coating Project. – Technology & Business Campus**

9. Amendment to Real Estate and Purchase and Sale Agreement and the Development Agreement – DFP, LLC – Richland Business Park

Executive Director Diahann Howard explained that DFP, LLC, purchased approximately one acre of land from the port in the Richland Business Park last May. Howard added that the purchase agreement requires them to tie in and extend utility to the port's land west of the development area, for which the port will share approximately \$50,000 of the cost. The agreement had the work required to be completed by December 31, 2024. DFP is currently under construction and has requested an extension to July 31, 2025.

Howard added that this work benefits the Port's property and supports the businesses growth and development. Howard noted that the owner is making good progress and the port recommends extending the date in good faith.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving the amendment to the real estate and purchase and sale agreement and the development agreement with DFP, LLC. – Richland Business Park**

**F. INFORMATION REPORTS:**

1. Grants Update

Executive Director Diahann Howard reviewed the grants report.

Item 12 – National Science Foundation – VERTical was asked to act as PI for submission and partnered with the state, CTA, WSU, PNPL, INL and INEC. \$160 million over 10 years, 15 million for years one and two.

Airport Manager Quentin Wright provided an update on airport-related projects.

Wright stated that the FAA plans to visit both airports next week.

Wright noted that the local chapter of the 99s has offered to paint the compass rose at Richland Airport, which is an 80-foot mural on the asphalt of a magnetic compass. A resolution will be provided at the May meeting.

Wright updated that 19 windows will be replaced at the Sky Park building, using the CARB loan dollars the estimated cost is just under \$50,000.

Wright stated that he hopes to bring a new hangar land lease to them at the May meeting for approval.

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

Commissioner Roy D. Keck reviewed recent meetings he has attended, noting a consistent message among all groups about funding uncertainty.

Commissioner Keck complimented the team on the recent TRIDEC Donuts & Development presentation.

Commissioner Scott D. Keller complimented the Donuts & Development presentation.

Commissioner Lori Stevens provided an update on Prosser meetings she has been attending, noting that the Tour Prosser updated website will be released soon. Commissioner Stevens added that Spring Barrel will be taking place at the end of the month and the Prosser Wine Network music festival will be back in June.

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

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

Director of Finance Jeff Lubeck provided a finance update, including an update on the 2023 audit, which is ongoing and the status of the 2024 closing, which is on track to be filed before the deadline.

Lubeck provided a financial status report on cash, noting to expect volatility due to timing of large projects, grant expenditures and grant reimbursements.

Lubeck reviewed March 2025 cash receipts and disbursements, including a review of the accounts receivable status, with the over 90 days column being low.

Lubeck reviewed the 2023 audits, noting that the accountability audit has been completed with no findings. The financial statement audit is ongoing. An entrance conference has been scheduled for the single audit.

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

Contract Port attorney John O'Leary stated that he had nothing to report but had items reserved for the executive session related to real estate and potential litigation.

### **3. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:**

Executive Director Diahann Howard reviewed recent and upcoming meetings and events she is involved in, including speaking at the ECA event regarding moving new nuclear projects forward and the Regional Chamber State of the Ports membership luncheon.

Howard stated that she attended a recent Association of Washington Business dinner and the WSU Women of Distinction event, retirement party for Port of Pasco's Randy Hayden, City of Prosser, City of Benton City meetings took place.

Howard announced that airport manager Quentin Wright has been named by the Journal of Business as a rising Young Professional.

Howard announced that Maul Foster & Alongi was selected to update the strategic plan, the contract is just under \$50,000 and will be executed later this week. Howard added that the company will be reaching out to the Commissioners to schedule one-on-one meetings.

Howard noted that eight proposals were received for the waterfront development plan and the team is currently reviewing all.



Howard briefed on the legislative uncertainty at the state and federal level, adding that the state of Washington has been fantastic to work with on the NSF grant.

Howard added that conversations are ongoing with the Class 1 railroads regarding the rail car charge. Howard stated that the State Route 240 rail crossing project has been tentatively scheduled to take place for the weekend of May 29 – June 2 and communication to the public and businesses has already begun.

Howard provided general updates on several projects, including grants and rail.

Howard provided a real estate update, including an update that the updated Barnhart lease has been executed as well as updates on other port-owned buildings, inquires for land and buildings

#### **I. FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER**

There were no comments regarding the Good of the Order schedule of events.

**J. EXECUTIVE SESSION:** The regular Commission meeting was recessed at 10:22 a.m. It was announced that an Executive Session would commence at 10:22 a.m. for 10 minutes to discuss real estate and potential litigation. It was noted that the regular meeting would be reconvened at 10:32 a.m.

The regular Commission meeting was reconvened at 10:27 a.m.

**K. BREAK:** It was announced that the teleconference and Zoom options would be terminated at this time. The meeting was recessed to allow the commission and staff to travel to Richland Business Park, 2579 Stevens Drive, for tours of the surrounding area.

**L. Tour Richland Business Park.** This event is open to the public. No action will occur during or after the tour of Richland Business Park and its surroundings.

**M. ADJOURNMENT:** No action was required. The meeting was adjourned at 11:43 a.m. with an announcement that the next regular Port of Benton Commission meeting would be held at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, May 22, 2025, at the Port of Benton Commission meeting room, 3250 Port of Benton Boulevard, Richland, Washington.

  
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Roy D. Keck, Commission Secretary