

**PORT OF BENTON
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
July 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, Jeff Lubeck, Quentin Wright, Summers Miya, Ron Branine, Cassie Hammond, Brandin Lopez, Audrey Burney

ALSO PRESENT: John O’Leary, Gravis Law; Clif Dyer, Sundance Aviation/Time2Fly

The following attendees attended via remote communications: Angela Saraceno-Lyman, Sheri Collins, Bryan Bell, Julia Mora, Joe Pisca, Ashley Garza, Teresa Hancock, Christy Rasmussen, Bryan Condon, Jon Ray, Jeff (No last name given)

The Commission meeting was noticed as required by RCW 42.30.070.

- B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Jeff Lubeck led those present to recite 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 July 9, 2025, Commission meeting, approval of minutes from June 18, 2025, Commission meeting, and approval of vouchers and certifications, including payroll, for the month of June totaling \$764,354.52.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT

Airport tenant Clif Dyer voiced concern regarding the handling of the previous day’s airport workshop, noting that the port had an opportunity to engage the community, but failed to do so and instead eroded trust.

Dyer urged improved engagement with tenants and added that most airport users have no objections to sharing water costs. Dyer emphasized that the recent utility issues should not overshadow the significant investments and positive developments at the airport.

E. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Resolution 25-25, Authorizing the Consent to Assignment for a Ground Lease Over Five Years from Extended Legacy, LLC to D&G Investors, LLC, Maughan Properties, LLC and Kothar, LLC – Richland Innovation Center

Real estate manager Audrey Burney explained that the transfer of this ground lease over five years from Extended Legacy, LLC to D&G Investors, LLC, Maughan Properties, LLC and

Kothar, LLC in the Richland Innovation Center is taking place prior to the completion of the land transfer. Once the transfer is complete, the City will take over.

A motion was made by Commissioner Roy Keck, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving Resolution 25-25, authorizing the consent to assignment for a ground lease over five years from Extended Legacy, LLC to D&G Investors, LLC, Maughan Properties, LLC and Kothar, LLC – Richland Innovation Center.

2. Resolution 25-26, Approving a Lease Agreement VB-S1 Assets, LLC, Vertical Bridge Cell Tower – Richland Business Park

Real estate manager Audrey Burney stated that the proposed lease agreement for VB-S1 Assets, LLC, Vertical Bridge Cell Tower in the Richland Business Park had two 10-year terms with three additional 5-year renewals, a potential of 25 years.

Burney stated that Vertical Bridge has provided a legal description and proposed changes and the draft lease is under legal and administrative review.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving Resolution 25-26, approving a lease agreement for VB-S1 Assets, LLC, Vertical Bridge Cell Tower – Richland Business Park

3. Resolution 25-27, Authorizing Updated Rates and Introduction of Reservation Fees at Crow Butte Park

Director of Facilities & Operations Ron Branine reviewed the key changes related to updated rates and the introduction of fees at Crow Butte Park:

- Regular camping fee: \$40 - \$45 per night
- Veteran camping fee: \$30 - \$35 per night
- Elimination of tent fees (tents at RV spots pay full price)
- Primitive tent/overflow: remains at \$20
- Reservation system fees: \$10 (phone-in) / \$8 (online), pending tech availability
- New reservation change/cancellation fees: \$10 (phone-in), \$8 (online)
- Upcoming capital improvements (pending 2026 budget): Ice/water vending, entry gate kiosk
- All rates still below state parks, review annually, aim for closer-to-neutral net in FY 2026
- Reservation software may be replaced to better integrate new gate system
- Volunteer staff continues to play a crucial role in park operations; moving forward with leaner core team

A motion was made by Commissioner Roy Keck, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving Resolution 25-27, authorizing updated rates and introduction of reservation fees at Crow Butte Park.

Resolution 25-28, Authorizing a Contract with Maul Foster Alongi for \$325,862.00 for 40 Acres of Shoreline Waterfront Drive Planning and Engineering Services – Technology & Business Center

Engineering & Development Manager Brandin Lopez reviewed the scope of the project that has been shared over the last couple commission meetings, stating that the planning and

engineering covers 40 acres of shoreline in the Technology & Business Center, adding that the contract includes environmental, cultural/tribal and site integration for economic development and recreational opportunities.

Lopez reviewed funding and timeline, noting that 40% will be spent in 2025 and completion is estimated around July 2026.

Lopez reviewed the selection process, which was an RFQ process and Maul Foster Alongi, along with cultural resource expertise, was selected.

Commissioner Scott Keller expressed concern over the contract size and requested a direct, detailed presentation from Maul Foster Alongi before approval. Commissioner Keller noted the importance of taxpayer transparency.

Commissioner Lori Stevens noted that she would also appreciate a presentation from Maul Foster Alongi before moving forward with a contract and Resolution 25-28 was tabled.

4. Acceptance of Work, Impervious Construction, LLC, 2939 Richardson Road Roof Replacement Project, \$67,709.70 – Technology & Business Center

Director of Facilities & Operations Ron Branine explained that Impervious offers a 15-year warranty with their roof replacements, using an advanced coating system. Branine added that the product has a federal and commercial track record, even in harsher environments. Branine added that the project total is \$67,709.70.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving acceptance of work to Impervious Construction, LLC, 2939 Richardson Road Roof Replacement Project, \$67,709.70 – Technology & Business Center.

5. Contract with Impervious Construction, LLC, 2579 Stevens Drive Roof Coating Project, \$72,921.24 – Richland Business Park

Director of Facilities & Operations Ron Branine noted that this contract for \$72,921.24 is for the same company that was awarded the roof replacement at 2579 Stevens Drive.

A motion was made by Commissioner Roy Keck, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving a contract with Impervious Construction, LLC, 2579 Stevens Drive Roof Coating Project, \$72,921.24.

6. Charter Communications Easement – Vintners Village

Engineering & Development Manager Brandin Lopez explained that Charter Communications is seeking an easement for added fiber service to buildings already served by other providers, which will increase tenant options.

Lopez added that the Port is awaiting the final decision from Charter but is seeking approval in advance to avoid delay.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving a Charter Communications easement – Vintners Village.

F. INFORMATION REPORTS

1. Grants Update

Executive director Diahann Howard reviewed the grants report.

Item 6 – NSF Engine, Engine grant application was not selected and this item will be removed from future reports.

Item 5 – 2579 Stevens Drive, Benton County Rural County Capital Funds .09 money. A presentation is scheduled for July 28, 2025.

Item 3 – Congressional Directed Spending Requests, Earmark from Senator Cantwell’s office for \$4.8 million.

Item 7 – FAA Airport Funds, Prosser Airport Apron Reconfiguration. FAA is funding 95%, WSDOT match covers another 2.5%. Slated for 2026.

G. COMMISSIONER REPORTS/COMMENTS

Commissioner Lori Stevens stated that she appreciated yesterday’s workshop. More conversation is needed involving the tenants and city and is looking forward to future meetings.

Commissioner Roy Keck stated that he has questions on whether the utility issues that included the port paying the utility bill have crossed the line and constituted gifting of public resources to private entities, particularly with wink-and-nod approvals from the port over the years.

Commissioner Scott Keller stated that stealing has never been the intent regarding the utility meters.

Commissioner Keller inquired about who opens mail in the Port office, noting that a personal note addressed to him was opened.

H. DIRECTOR REPORTS/COMMENTS

1. Finance Director

Director of Finance Jeff Lubeck provided a financial status report, noting that the 2023 audit has been completed with a clean opinion and the report will be released on July 10. 2024 audit planning is underway with a goal to be completed by September.

Lubeck reviewed current disbursements and receivables and stated that a \$1.1 million grant reimbursement request has been submitted, with funds expected in July or August.

Lubeck announced that the 2026 budget process has begun and the staff input phase has started. An internal review will begin in August with Commissioner one-on-one meetings scheduled for mid to late September. Lubeck reviewed the budget timeline.

2. Port Attorney

Contract Port attorney John O’Leary stated that he had no updates for the regular or executive session.

3. Executive Director

Executive director Diahann Howard reviewed recent highlights, including co-hosting the M-84 event in Kalama with several other ports. Howard announced that there have been further conversations with a Clore prospect.

Howard announced that the facilities team recently said goodbye to Cory Roemeling, who moved to Idaho.

Howard reviewed recent meetings she has attended, including WPPA legislative meetings. Future meetings include the WPPA Executive Director Seminar and a PNWER speaking engagement.

Howard provided a real estate update, praising real estate manager Audrey Burney for her work on the HMiS lease and also noted that the Benton City land sale is closing soon, and the M&M orchard lease in Prosser will be terminating however the Port has already lined up a potential tenant for this site.

Howard added that building scans have been underway at 2579 Stevens Drive, which provides utility mapping and is prep for the pursuit of a Clean Buildings Act exemption.

Howard updated that the Phase 2 land transfer of the Richland Innovation Center property is continuing and on track. Eleven leases will be transferred to the City.

Howard added that the meeting with the Governor's office has changed, which opens up the original date of the August Commission meeting, if the Commission should choose to go back to that date.

I. FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

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

J. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There were no items for an executive session.

K. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:22 a.m. with an announcement that the next regular Port of Benton Commission meeting would be held at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, August 6, 2025, at the Port of Benton Commission meeting room, 3250 Port of Benton Boulevard, Richland, Washington.



Roy D. Keck, Commission Secretary