

**PORT OF BENTON
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
August 6, 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 (attended virtually), 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; Helen den Hoed; Joe Schiessl, City of Richland; Aileen Coverdell, Mid-Columbia Ninety-Nines

The following attendees attended via remote communications: Jorge Celestino, Angela Saraceno-Lyman, Bryan Bell, Julia Mora, Ashley Garza, Teresa Hancock, Christy Rasmussen, Jeff (No last name given), Seth Otto, Maul Foster Alongi, Kristi Boon, Maul Foster Alongi, Bryan Condon, Century West Engineers, Debbie Berkowitz, Hans Wellenbrock, David Harder, Plateau Cultural Resource Management

The Commission meeting was noticed as required by RCW 42.30.070.

- B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Cassie Hammond led those present to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Keller requested that the July 8, 2025, airport workshop minutes be tabled to allow for further description to be added to the minutes.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission approving the agenda for the August 6, 2025, Commission meeting, approval of minutes from July 9, 2025, Commission meeting, and approval of vouchers and certifications, including payroll, for the month of July totaling \$808,546.13.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT

Joe Schiessl, City of Richland, voiced support for Resolution 25-28, a contract with Maul Foster Alongi, related to waterfront planning. Schiessl stated that the City is in a comprehensive plan year and sees the timing ideal for collaboration. Schiessl endorsed Maul Foster Alongi’s competency from the City’s prior experience and emphasized the need for timely commencement due to the length and complexity of the process.

E. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Amendment to 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 this resolution was presented at the July meeting and Exhibit B was incorrect due to an administrative oversight. The correct material was previously labeled as Exhibit D and has now been redesignated as Exhibit B.

A motion was made by Commissioner Roy Keck, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving amended 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. Maul Foster Alongi, Shoreline Waterfront Development Presentation – Technology & Business Center

Engineering & Development Manager Brandin Lopez provided background, explaining the interest in the port's waterfront property not just for private development, but also public river access and community improvements to the waterfront area, including Waterfront Drive, which has been part of the port's comprehensive plan for a while. To move this vision forward, the port issued a request for qualifications on March 12, which included evaluating cultural review, development of conceptual site plans, market analysis, utility plan, identifying permitting needs, plans that support future grant funding requests and engaging key stakeholders and community to support a cohesive and feasible waterfront plan. The port received eight proposals which were evaluated on qualifications, relevant project experience, and the criteria outlined in the Request for Qualifications. The top three firms were selected for virtual interviews and Maul Foster Alongi (MFA) was the top choice.

Seth Otto and Kristi Boon of MFA and David Harder of Plateau Cultural Resources Management provided a presentation outlining their approach. This approach included the following:

Three Phases:

1. **Discover:** Baseline data—site conditions, utilities, land use, cultural/geotechnical/environmental review, permitting needs.
2. **Illuminate:** Alternatives analysis—market, stakeholder input, conceptual plans, community/partner engagement, design charrette, open house.
3. **Implement:** Preferred plan development, action items, funding/grant identification, detailed roadmap for improvements and private investment.

Past Project Examples Highlighted:

- a. Waterfront developments for Port of Kalama; combined admin/public use, preservation of access, successful permitting.
- b. Port of Camas-Washougal: Public improvements created catalyst effect for private investment; site characterization (including environmental remediation) was foundational.

- c. Plateau CRM: Direct local experience (e.g., Crossroad Vineyard) with tribal consultation, archaeological site work, and navigating overlapping federal/local interests.

Duration and Public Engagement:

- **Timeline Estimate:** 12–18 months.
- **Public Engagement Plan:**
 - Info materials/web for initial outreach.
 - Stakeholder interviews.
 - Design charrette/workshop (midpoint).
 - Open house (final plan feedback).
 - Possibility to add a community-wide survey (not currently included to stay within initial budget).

Discussion & Commissioner Input:

- **Community Engagement:**
 - Emphasis by Commissioner Stevens: Need more upfront public input—possibly a general idea-gathering survey.
 - Port staff clarified budget trade-offs but open to expanding public input scope if commission wishes.
 - Phased approach favored: Begin with physical/cultural/Geotech "homework" so public plans are achievable.
 - Port is responsible to “characterize the site” before seeking developer proposals.
- **Budget and Phasing Concerns:**
 - Initial contract is \$325,862 for (site characterization, planning, engagement—over 12–18 months).
 - Commissioners Keller and Stevens questioned high cost; suggested breaking into phased authorizations rather than full commitment.
 - Possible City/Port collaboration floated, but port wants to safeguard its independent process and investment prudence.
- **Historic Planning Review:**
 - Previous master plans lacked full environmental/cultural review.

- Confirmation that all prior plans/studies will be inventoried in this new effort.
- City of Richland is currently under contract with another planning consultant for different projects.

- **Next Steps:**

- Commissioners requested breaking out the contract into “cultural and geotechnical” as initial phase, possibly half the total (\$160–\$170k).
- MFA and staff will revise phased proposal and bring back for further commission approval.

3. 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

A motion was made by Commissioner Roy Keck to approve Resolution 25-28. Commissioner Scott Keller stated that he would not second the motion. Commissioner Lori Stevens did not comment.

Commissioner Scott Keller made a motion to table Resolution 25-28, to authorize a contract with Maul Foster Alongi for \$325,862.00 for 40 acres of shoreline Waterfront Drive planning and engineering services, Technology & Business Center.

Commissioner Lori Stevens seconded the motion. Motion carried.

4. Resolution 25-29, Authorizing an Extension of the Closing Date for the Sale of Real Property to Issar, LLC, As Previously Approved in Resolution 25-14 – Benton City

Real Estate Manager Audrey Burney explained that Resolution 25-29 provides an extension of the closing date for sale of Subway building (SR LLC, Benton City) from August 15 to September 15, 2025, to allow for bank appraisal completion.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving Resolution 25-29, authorizing an extension of the closing date for the sale of real property to Issar, LLC, as previously approved in Resolution 25-19.

5. Resolution 25-30, Approving an Aeronautical Ground Lease for Rainier Aircraft Services, LLC Contingent on Sale – Richland Airport

Airport Manager Quentin Wright explained Resolution 25-30 approves a new aeronautical ground lease (Rainier Aircraft Services LLC; contingent on hangar sale completion; Richland Airport). Standard lease terms (30 years plus 4x5-year options).

A motion was made by Commissioner Roy Keck, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving Resolution 25-30, approving an aeronautical ground lease for Rainier Aircraft Services, LLC, contingent on sale at Richland Airport.

6. Amendment to Contract for Railroad Services (Trackage Rights) – Richland Business Park

Executive Director Diahann Howard explained that this amendment is tied to historic 1947 agreement; refreshes map, institutes \$100/car charge, average recalculated triennially.

Howard explained that completion expected by September–October 2025; Revenue of ~\$600,000 anticipated for 2025 (projected half a year), only a portion will be able to be collected .

A motion was made by Commissioner Roy Keck, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving an amendment to contract for railroad services (trackage rights), Richland Business Park.

7. Acceptance of Work, Priority One Fence Company, Airport East Fencing Project, \$48,675.86 – Prosser Airport

Director of Facilities and Operations Ron Branine explained that the airport east fencing project covers the perimeter of the airport, includes a swing gate and will support events such as the Prosser Balloon Rally.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission, accepting work completed by Priority One Fence Company, Airport East Fencing Project, \$48,675.86 – Prosser Airport.

8. Acceptance of Work, Columbia Sweeping Service, Inc., 2579 Stevens Drive Crack Seal and Coat Project, \$147,366.33 – Richland Business Park

Director of Facilities and Operations Ron Branine stated that two bids were received for this project and the lower bid was selected. The quality of the project was praised and the project came in under budget.

A motion was made by Commissioner Roy Keck, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission, accepting work completed by Columbia Sweeping Service, Inc., 2579 Stevens Drive Crack Seal and Coat Project, \$147,366.33 – Richland Business Park.

9. Change Order, C & C Construction Services, Inc., 2579 Stevens Drive Roof Replacement Project, \$11,577.59 – Richland Business Park

Director of Facilities and Operations Ron Branine explained that the C & C Construction Services change order is for the roof at 2579 Stevens Drive, which required unanticipated drainage improvements after debris removal and was performed under contract scope.

Branine stated that despite the change order, final was \$8,000 under budget.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission, accepting a change order, C & C Construction Services, Inc., 2579 Stevens Drive Roof Replacement Project, \$11,577.59 – Richland Business Park.

10. Change Order, PND Engineers Port Electrification Project, \$90,000 – Technology & Business Center

Engineering & Development Manager Brandin Lopez explained that during an underwater assessment, the appraisal found concerning corrosion on certain sheet pile sections, due to interaction of mixed metals and city irrigation intake. The proposal adds a \$90,000 change order to PND Engineers for comprehensive corrosion mitigation (sacrificial anode system, engineering, dive work). Lopez added that the City of Richland’s financial responsibility for their intake is being negotiated, with a possible cost recovery for port.

Lopez added that the shore power conceptual design has been updated; project permitting in process, likely multi-year timeline due to limited in-water work window.

A motion was made by Commissioner Roy Keck, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission, accepting a change order to PND Engineers for the Port Electrification Project, \$90,000, Technology & Business Center.

11. Proclamation 25-02, Honoring the Mid-Columbia Chapter of the Ninety Nines – Richland Airport

Airport Manager Quentin Wright explained that Proclamation 25-02 honors the Mid-Columbia Chapter of the Ninety Nines, noting that the compass rose looks amazing and looks forward to working with the chapter at the Prosser Airport as well.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving Proclamation 25-02, honoring the Mid-Columbia Chapter of the Ninety-Nines, Richland Airport.

F. INFORMATION REPORTS

1. Grants Update

Executive director Diahann Howard reviewed the grants report.

Item 3 – Congressional Directed Spending Requests – Port of Benton White Bluffs Rail Project Modernization and Intermodal Facility. \$2.5 million approved but pending final congressional action.

Item 5 – 2579 Stevens Drive Offices – Benton County Rural County Capital Funds .09 grant request presentation made and request approved. Proceeding to disbursement agreement for board approval. \$2.4 million CERB loan already secured.

Airport Manager Quentin Wright reviewed airport-related grant updates.

Item 7 – FAA Airport Funds, Prosser Airport Apron Reconfiguration. FAA is funding 95%, WSDOT match covers another 2.5%. Slated for 2026.
Early 2026, we will get the community involved with a public meeting to discuss airport closures.

G. COMMISSIONER REPORTS/COMMENTS

Commissioner Lori Stevens had no comments.

Commissioner Scott Keller stated that he visited Tri-Cities Intermodal. Commissioner Keller stated that he visited Crow Butte Park, noting that the park looks great and the park is a great asset for that part of the county.

Commissioner Keller requested an update on Atlas Agro.

Executive director Diahann Howard stated that she meets with Atlas Agro earlier in the month and they are still proceeding to move forward. They recently had their hydrogen tax credits approved and will provide notice per their contract, which is set for end of January, 2026.

Commissioner Keller requested an update on the Clore Center.

Executive director Diahann Howard stated that the port continues to wait on a business plan from the potential operator, noting that the port remains in contact with them.

Commissioner Keller commented on the recent press release related to the audit report, clarifying if the port received management notes and if the report was submitted a year late, which should be noted in the press release for transparency.

Commissioner Keller inquired about a \$35,000 payment sent to Maul Foster Alongi, requesting information on what that payment was for and the amount of the contract.

Clarification was provided that the \$35,000 payment to Maul Foster Alongi was for strategic plan purposes, work completed. Diahann Howard stated that the contract amount was for under \$50,000, but Commissioner Stevens had requested an additional workshop, which would add additional costs in 2026.

Commissioner Keller questioned additional payments to HDR, RGW and IC Consultants, which were explained as rail and grant-related.

Commissioner Keller questioned CKT Architects, which was explained was for a radar assessment at 2579 Stevens Drive.

Commissioner Keller noted that \$150,000 was spent in one month for outside consulting and noted that the entire year budget for outside consulting is \$1.1 million.

Commissioner Roy Keck read a prepared statement, which has been included as Attachment A.

H. DIRECTOR REPORTS/COMMENTS

1. Finance Director

Director of Finance Jeff Lubeck provided a financial status report.

Lubeck stated that the 2024 audit was underway. The federal single audits (grants) was nearly complete and the State Auditor's Office (SAO) was performing pre-audit testing and analysis, with an entrance conference to be scheduled soon.

Lubeck provided a financial status report, noting that the July financials have not yet been received from Benton County Treasurer. Lubeck noted that several large grant reimbursements occurred in July 2025. Lubeck said to expect continued volatility due to timing of large projects, grant expenditures and grant reimbursements.

Lubeck provided an update on cash activity, stating the numbers have not been updated due to not receiving the report from the Treasurer's office yet.

Lubeck overviewed cash receipts and disbursements and accounts receivables.

Lubeck reviewed the budget schedule, noting that budget development is in process.

Lubeck added that the supporting financial aspects of the land exchange with the City of Richland is set to close.

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 several regional presentations. Howard added that there are several industry and legislative visits to the port scheduled for the coming weeks.

Howard added that surplus rail equipment is being liquidated, per the delegation of authority.

Howard stated that there has been activities on numerous leases, including nine new rental prospects and three land prospects. Howard noted that the staff hopes to bring a real estate contract forward next month.

Howard added that the City is preparing letters to tenants regarding water and sewer connections and the port will handle easements after City permits.

Howard stated that the Port Appreciation BBQ will be held at the Port office tomorrow.

Howard noted that there is one item related to real estate at Richland Business Park for executive session.

I. FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

Executive director Diahann Howard noted that PNWA has rescheduled their annual meeting by one week, which will conflict with the Port's October Commission meeting.

Howard added that the Budget Workshop will be moved to accommodate AAPA annual meeting travel, where she has been asked to present.

J. EXECUTIVE SESSION

The regular Commission meeting was recessed at 10:05 a.m. It was announced that an Executive Session would commence at 10:05 a.m. for five minutes to discuss real estate at the Richland Business Park. It was noted that the regular meeting would be reconvened at 10:10 a.m. The regular Commission meeting was reconvened at 10:11 a.m.

No further action was taken.

K. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:11 a.m. with an announcement that the next regular Port of Benton Commission meeting would be held at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, September 10, 2025, at the Clore Center, 2140 Wine Country Road, Prosser, Washington.



Roy D. Keck, Commission Secretary