

**PORT OF BENTON  
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
November 12, 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 Roy D. Keck (attended virtually), Commissioner Lori Stevens

**PORT STAFF PRESENT:** Diahann Howard, Alicia Myers, Quentin Wright, Summers Miya, Ron Branine, Audrey Burney

**ALSO PRESENT:** John O'Leary, Gravis Law; Clif Dyer, Sundance Aviation/Tym2Fly; Scott Urban, Richland Airport; Jeff Hanoff, Richland Airport; Gareth Nisbett

**The following attendees attended via remote communications:** Jeff Lubeck, Bryan Bell, Sheri Collins, Jorge Celestino, Cassie Losey, Angela Saraceno-Lyman, Julia Mora, Joe Pisca, Ashley Garza, Jeff Losey, Rachel Visick, Tri-Cities Area Journal of Business, Joshua Lott, Anderson Perry, Bryan Condon, Century West Engineering

The Commission meeting was noticed as required by RCW 42.30.070.

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

**C. CONSENT AGENDA**

A motion was made by Commissioner Scott Keller to amend the agenda by removing business items 2, 4, and 5 until the January Commission meeting.

The motion was not seconded and did not proceed.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission approving the agenda for the November 12, 2025, Commission meeting, approval of minutes from the October 13, 2025, Commission workshop, approval of minutes from the October 15, 2025, Commission meeting, approval of vouchers and certifications, including payroll, for the month of October totaling \$1,097,868.24.

**D. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**E. PUBLIC HEARING**

Commission President Scott Keller recessed the regular meeting at 8:33 a.m.

Commission President Scott Keller opened the public hearing at 8:33 a.m.

1. 2026 Port of Benton Budget
2. 2026 Comprehensive Plan of Harbor Improvements

Diahann Howard noted that both the budget and comprehensive plan were previously presented at the October workshop and meeting and had been open for public comment for 30 days. No public comment was received for either document.

Howard stated that the budget revenues increased by approximately \$100,000 due to final allocation and notice of taxes by Benton County.

Commission President Scott Keller closed the public hearing at 8:35 a.m.

#### **F. ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

1. Resolution 25-42, Port of Benton 2026 Budget Adoption; Resolution 25-43, Port of Benton 2026 Comprehensive Plan of Harbor Improvements Adoption; Resolution 25-44, Certifying the Port of Benton's 2025 Levy for 2026 Property Tax Collection

**A motion was made by Commissioner Roy Keck, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving Resolution 25-42, Port of Benton 2026 budget adoption; Resolution 25-43, Port of Benton 2026 Comprehensive Plan of Harbor Improvements Adoption; and Resolution 24-44, Certifying the Port of Benton's 2025 levy for 2026 property tax collection.**

Resolution 25-45, A Resolution of the Port of Benton to Appoint a New Port Auditor

Executive Director Diahann Howard explained that Resolutions 25-45 through 24-48 were related to Jeff Lubeck's upcoming retirement at the end of 2025. Howard introduced Alicia Myers, who was hired as Director of Finance, and noted that Myers had previous port and State Auditors' office experience.

**A motion to appoint a new port auditor, made by Commissioner Lori Stevens and seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, was declined by Commissioner Scott Keller. Resolution 25-45 passed.**

3. Resolution 25-46, Appointment of Public Records Officer

Executive Director Diahann Howard explained that Alicia Myers will take over Jeff Lubeck's role as the Port's public records officer.

**A motion to appoint a new public records officer, made by Commissioner Lori Stevens and seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, was declined by Commissioner Scott Keller. Resolution 25-46 passed.**

4. Resolution 25-47, Appointment of Claims for Damages Agent

**A motion to appoint a new claims for damages agent, made by Commissioner Lori Stevens and seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, was declined by Commissioner Scott Keller. Resolution 25-47 passed.**

5. Resolution 25-48, A Resolution of the Port of Benton Amending Signers for Banner Bank

**A motion to amend the signers by Banner Bank, made by Commissioner Lori Stevens and seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, was declined by Commissioner Scott Keller. Resolution**

**25-48 passed.**

6. Resolution 25-49, A Resolution of the Port of Benton Relating to the Disbursement Agreement for the Use of Rural County Capital Funds Between Benton County and the Port of Benton

Executive Director Diahann Howard explained that Resolution 25-49 accepts the \$1.7 million grant for improvements to 2579 Stevens Drive. Howard explained that the \$1.7 million rural county capital funds will be paired with port funds and a CERB loan.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Roy Keck, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving Resolution 25-49, accepting the \$1.7 million rural county capital funds from Benton County.**

7. Resolution 25-50, A Resolution of the Port of Benton Authorizing the Execution Lease Modification No. 5 to the Ground Lease Agreement with Lucas H. Holdings, LLC, Richland Airport

Executive Director Diahann Howard stated that Resolution 25-50 implements a five-year staircase rent schedule, including fair market adjustments starting December 2030 and every three years thereafter.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving Resolution 25-50, authorizing the execution of lease modification number five to the ground lease agreement with Lucas Holdings, LLC, Richland Airport.**

8. Contract with Ecomodus for 3250 Port of Benton Blvd. LED Lighting Project \$106,743.40, Technology & Business Center

Director of Facilities & Operations Ron Branine explained that the total contract, including sales tax to upgrade lighting at 3250 Port of Benton Blvd., is \$106,743.40, plus a \$13,000 incentive from the City of Richland.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Roy Keck, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving the contract with Ecomodus for 3250 Port of Benton Blvd. LED lighting project for \$106,743.40.**

9. Contract with Ecomodus for 2579 Stevens Drive LED Lighting Project \$122,722.30, Richland Business Park

Director of Facilities & Operations Ron Branine explained that the total contract, including sales tax to upgrade lighting at 2579 Stevens Drive, is \$122,722.30 with a \$36,000 incentive from the City of Richland.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving the contract with Ecomodus for 2579 Stevens Drive LED lighting project for \$122,722.30.**

10. Acceptance of Work, Stacy and Witbeck \$1,341,975.30, State Route 240 Railroad Crossing Replacement Project

Executive Director Diahann Howard stated that the State Route 240 railroad crossing replacement project is ready to be closed out for \$1,341,975.30, noting that the contractor has been asked to return to perform some panel repairs.

Howard noted that approvals have been approved on the Steptoe Drive project.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving the acceptance of work to Stacy and Witbeck for \$1,341,975.30 for the State Route 240 railroad crossing replacement project.**

11. Contract Amendment, \$80,000 Through Year-End for Gravis Law

Executive Director Diahann Howard stated that a \$80,000 contract amendment to Gravis Law is needed for unanticipated research and compliance work related to the industrial land exchange and other complaints. Howard noted that the amendment may need a further increase pending complaint volume and outside work.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving the contract amendment for Gravis Law, for a contract amendment of an additional \$80,000 through year-end.**

12. 2026 Meeting Dates

Executive Director Diahann Howard and PIO Summers Miya reviewed the proposed 2026 meeting dates, noting the months in which a conflict prevents the standard second Wednesday of the month pattern.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving the proposed 2026 meeting dates.**

**G. INFORMATION REPORTS**

1. Grants Update

Airports – Quentin Wright stated that Western United Civil Group has started ordering materials for the 2026 Prosser Airport pavement maintenance project.

2. Legislative Update

Director of Governmental Affairs Cassie Losey outlined key 2026 legislative priorities:

- State trade strategy – focus on global trade, job creation and supply chain efficiency. This is a WPPA backed document the Port has been
- Target Urban Area Consumption (TUA) – efforts to secure tax breaks for new constructions without adverse tax-shifting
- Clean Energy – support for public agency and utility projects in partnership with Energy Northwest
- Economic Development – Advocacy for continued CARB funding to airports, site certification readiness and port electrification grants
- Protection of .09 funds for economic development

Losey noted the need to correct public misinformation regarding TUA's tax impacts (Richland's method avoids negative tax shift scenarios).

Losey stated that there is a letter to Governor Ferguson for a request for state funding for Lower Columbia River Channel maintenance, to match Oregon's \$50 million commitment for a \$170 million project.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck, and unanimously passed by the Commission, authorizing the Executive Director to sign the letter to Governor Ferguson related to Columbia River Channel maintenance.**

### 3. Capital Projects Update

Director of Facilities and Operations Ron Branine noted that he already covered the LED lighting projects at 3250 and 2579.

Executive Director Diahann Howard announced that the electrification grant is at 30% design; corrosion has been identified in sheet piling, likely due to the City's irrigation pump. Howard noted that shared repair costs are being negotiated with the City Where the City would cover 70%, and Port would cover 30%. Howard added that more frequent inspections will commence.

## H. COMMISSIONER REPORTS/COMMENTS

Commissioner Scott Keller had no comments.

Commissioner Lori Stevens had no comments.

Commissioner Roy Keck stated that he has filed a complaint regarding Commissioner Keller's actions and that an additional review has been requested. Commissioner Keck stated that he will seek additional reports and files additional complaints at the next meeting..

## I. DIRECTOR REPORTS/COMMENTS

### 1. Finance Director

Director of Finance Jeff Lubeck provided a financial status report.

Lubeck reviewed the cash financial status, stating that the current cash balance is the second highest in the past four years. All billed grants have been received. Property tax revenue deposits received in October. Cash balance volatility will decrease for a few months due to a break between grant programs.

Lubeck reviewed October cash receipts and disbursements.

Lubeck reviewed the accounts receivable financial status report over 90 days.

Lubeck reviewed operating revenues through September 30, including budget vs. actuals and total operating expenses and a departmental budget overview.

Lubeck stated that the 2024 audit is wrapping up, with the single audit complete with no issues identified. Lubeck added that the financial statement audit is wrapping up, with no issues identified to date.

Lubeck welcomed Alicia Myers and noted that a revised HR policy is currently under staff review and will be brought forward at the December Commission meeting for approval. Lubeck stated that there are no major changes, with the only changes related to ensuring compliance with FPLA and PFML recent changes and ensuring consistency between sections.

## **2. Port Attorney**

Contract Port attorney John O'Leary stated that he had no updates for the regular session, but has items for the executive session related to real estate at Prosser Wine and Food Park and personnel.

## **3. Executive Director**

Executive director Diahann Howard provided an update on recent meetings and events she has participated in.

Howard stated that several upcoming agreements and contracts will be brought to the December meeting, including the month-to-month short-line operator agreement for the Columbia Rail extension, the Sandhill Crane easement, and stormwater maintenance agreements. Howard added that the car counter installation is expected in early 2026.

Howard announced that the engineer, Brandin Lopez, will be leaving the port, but is assisting during the transition.

Howard provided an update on port tenant, Barnhart, noting that they have requested to shift from the south side of 2579 Stevens to the north side, which is closer to their yard. Howard stated that a lease amendment is planned for February 2026.

Howard provided updates on real estate, noting that 11 lease modifications are in progress, including three terminations. A notable termination is M&M Orchard, with a walk-through scheduled for mid-November. Howard requested an executive session for real estate matters related to Prosser Wine and Food Park.

Howard added that there are 13 rental prospects, including six land prospects in discussion.

Howard reviewed recent meetings and events, including Entrepreneurial Awards, Northwest Seaport Alliance, Association of Washington Business and the rail open house, VERTical convening and Council of Governments meetings.

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

Executive director Diahann Howard inquired if there were any comments for the Good of the Order and if the Commission would like to continue receiving the report.

There were no comments.

## **K. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The regular Commission meeting was recessed at 9:23 a.m., with an announcement that an Executive Session would commence at 9:23 a.m. for 15 minutes to discuss real estate and personnel matters. It was noted that the regular meeting would be reconvened at 9:40 a.m.

#### **L. ADJOURNMENT**

With no action needed, the meeting was adjourned at 9:38 a.m. with an announcement that the next regular Port of Benton Commission meeting would be held at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, December 10, 2025, at the Port of Benton Commission meeting room, located at 3250 Port of Benton Blvd., Richland, Washington.



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Roy D. Keck, Commission Secretary