

The Port of Benton Commission Meetings are open to the public.

The regular Commission meeting will be available via Zoom, a telephone conference call-in line, and in person. The link to access this broadcast via Zoom and the call-in number to participate via telephone will be made available on the Port of Benton's website at the link below, along with the meeting agenda and minutes from past meetings. Live broadcast information: www.portofbenton.com/commission

For those unable to access the internet, please call 509-375-3060 by 8:00 a.m. on January 28, 2026, to receive call-in details.

All participants will be muted upon entry; when prompted, click 'raise hand' in Zoom or dial star + 9 (*9) to raise your hand. The host will unmute you to speak in the order in which your hands are raised. Press star + 6 (*6) when the host calls on you to unmute yourself.

**PORT OF BENTON
REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING
Agenda
8:30 a.m., January 28, 2026
3250 Port of Benton Blvd., Richland, WA 99354**

A. CALL TO ORDER

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

C. CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Approval of Minutes of January 7, 2026, Special Commission Meeting
3. Approval of Minutes of January 14, 2026, Commission Meeting

D. PUBLIC COMMENT

E. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Resolution 26-09, A Resolution of the Port of Benton Amending Signers for Banner and Key Banks
2. Resolution 26-10, Sandhill Crane Substation – City of Richland Easement Expansion

3. Resolution 26-11, A Policy to Standardize Lease Areas at Richland and Prosser Airports
4. Resolution 26-12, Sky Hangars Association Lease Modification Number 3 – 1945 Terminal Drive, Richland Airport
5. Wine Country Road & Old Inland Empire Highway Roundabout, Prosser

F. COMMISSIONER REPORTS/COMMENTS

G. DIRECTOR REPORTS/COMMENTS

1. Port Attorney
2. Executive Director

H. FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

- I. RECESS TO EXECUTIVE SESSION as legally allowed pursuant to RCW 42.30.110(1)(f), to discuss real estate and personnel.

The session is expected to take 60 minutes.

J. ADJOURNMENT

The next regular Port of Benton Commission meeting will be held on **Wednesday, February 11, 2026, at 8:30 a.m.** at the Port of Benton Commission room at 3250 Port of Benton Blvd., Richland, Washington.

Visit portofbenton.com for notices and information.

PORT OF BENTON
SPECIAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
January 7, 2026

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, Commissioner Bill O’Neil, 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, Richland Airport; Roy Keck, Richland; Gareth Nisbett; Dennis Collins; Mark Underwood; Council Member Shayne Van Dyke, City of Richland; Joe Pisca; Lori French

The following attendees attended via remote communications: Sheri Collins; Angela Saraceno-Lyman; Julia Mora; Bryan Bell; Cassie Losey; Wendy Culverwell, Tri-City Herald; Rachel Visick, Tri-Cities Area Journal of Business; Trent Hall; Jon Ray; Ashley Garza; Christy (No Last Name); R. Howard; Jeannie Beckett; Guest; 253-229-6727; 206-910-4573; Samsung

The Commission meeting was noticed as required by RCW 42.30.070.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Commissioner Bill O’Neil led those present in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Roy Keck read a prepared statement. * *Included as attachment A.*

Clif Dyer acknowledged retaliatory behavior as a central concern and called for process-driven, unemotional correction of dysfunction at the port. Dyer cited high costs incurred during recent investigations, attributing some to personal conflicts. Dyer emphasized a need for unity and forward progress post-election. Dyer urged all parties to do their jobs with honesty and integrity.

D. CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of Agenda

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Bill O’Neil, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving the January 7, 2026, special Commission meeting agenda.

E. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Motion to Amend the Rules of Port of Benton Port Commission Rules of Policy and Procedure

A motion was made by Commissioner Bill O’Neil, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving the motion to amend the rules of Port of Benton Port Commission Rules of Policy and Procedure.

2. Election of Commission Officers

Commissioner Bill O'Neil presented a slate of officers for consideration, with Commissioner Bill O'Neil, president, Commissioner Scott Keller, secretary, and Commissioner Lori Stevens, secretary.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Bill O'Neil and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving Bill O'Neil as president, Scott Keller as Vice President and Lori Stevens as secretary.

3. Resolution 26-01, Resolution to Amend the Port Executive Director's Delegation of Authority

A motion was made by Commissioner Scott Keller, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving Resolution 26-01, amending the Port's executive director's delegation of authority.

4. Motion To Delegate Authority to the Commission President to Review, Take Action, and Make Recommendations to the Commission at the Commission's next Meeting of January 14, 2026, on Port Organizational & Structure of Business Lines and Consultant Contracts, which may include directing the Executive Director to initiate any action, prepare any report, or initiate any project or study (Rules 13.2), and which may include communicating with Staff, seeking information from and giving direction to persons who report directly or indirectly to the Executive Director. (Rules 12.3)

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Scott Keller and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving the Commission president to review, take action, and make recommendations to the Commission at the Commission's next meeting of January 14, 2026, on Port Organizational & Structure of business lines and consultant contracts, which may include directing the Executive Director to initiate any action, prepare any report, or initiate any project or study (Rules 13.2), and which may include communicating with Staff, seeking information from and giving direction to persons who report directly or indirectly to the Executive Director. (Rules 12.3)

F. RECESS TO EXECUTIVE SESSION as legally allowed pursuant to RCW 42.30.110(1)(f), to discuss personnel and "to receive and evaluate complaints or charges brought against a public officer or employee."

The regular meeting was recessed at 9:15 a.m. It was announced that an Executive Session would commence at 9:15 a.m. for 30 minutes to discuss the items noted.

At 9:45 a.m., it was announced that an additional 30 minutes were required for the Executive Session, and the regular meeting would reconvene at 10:15 a.m.

At 10:15 a.m., it was announced that an additional 45 minutes were required for the Executive Session, and the regular meeting would reconvene at 11:00 a.m.

At 11 a.m., it was announced that an additional 30 minutes were required for the Executive Session, and the regular meeting would reconvene at 11:30 a.m.

At 11:30 a.m., the regular meeting was reconvened.

Commissioner Bill O’Neil made a motion to defer action until the next Port of Benton Commission meeting, on January 14, 2026, regarding the complaints or charges brought against a public officer or employee. Commissioner Lori Stevens seconded the motion and it was unanimously passed by the Commission.

Commissioner Bill O’Neil made a motion to suspend executive director Diahann Howard with pay, while an investigation takes place related to employee complaints, effective January 7, 2026. Commissioner Lori Stevens seconded the motion and it was unanimously passed by the Commission.

Commissioner Lori Stevens made a motion to appoint Commission president Bill O’Neil to facilitate any necessary personnel changes and any other steps as a result of the suspension. Commissioner Scott Keller seconded the motion and it was unanimously passed by the Commission.

K. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 a.m. with an announcement that the next regular Port of Benton Commission meeting would be held at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, January 14, 2026, at the Port of Benton Commission meeting room located at 3250 Port of Benton Blvd., Richland, Washington.

Lori Stevens, Commission Secretary

PORT OF BENTON
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
January 14, 2026

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 Bill O’Neil, Commissioner Lori Stevens

PORT STAFF PRESENT: Ron Branine, Alicia Myers, Quentin Wright, Summers Miya, Bryan Bell, Audrey Burney, Cassie Losey

ALSO PRESENT: John O’Leary, Gravis Law; Clif Dyer, Sundance Aviation/Tym2Fly, Helen den Hoed, Jon Ray, Richland Airport; Dennis Collins, Mark Underwood, Richland Airport; Rick Heath, Heath Energy; RJ Blahut, Prosser Airport; Lynn Carlson, Roy Keck, Samantha Peterson, Century West; Kurt Addicott, Century West; Virginia Tomlinson, Joan Wright, Davis Raile, NBC Right Now; Rachel Visick, Tri-City Area Journal of Business

The following attendees attended via remote communications: Sheri Collins, Jorge Celestino, Angela Saraceno-Lyman, Julia Mora, Ashley Garza, Stephanie Bowman, Brian Young, Hans Wellenbrack, Brandon Morgan, Stuart Smith, Columbia Rail; Tina Rex, Wendy Culverwell, Tri-City Herald; Nick Zamantakis, Columbia Rail; Bryan Condon, Century West; Jim Millbauer, Trent Hall, Columbia Rail; Brian Malley, Melinda Mazuer, Jen Cash, Lauren Granger, Jeff Losey, Joshua Lott, Anderson Perry; Rich Christensen, Playing tball’s iPhone

The Commission meeting was noticed as required by RCW 42.30.070.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Commissioner Lori Stevens led those present to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens seconded by Commissioner Scott Keller, and unanimously passed by the Commission approving the agenda for the January 14, 2026, Commission meeting, approval of minutes from the December 10, 2025, Commission meeting, approval of vouchers and certifications, including payroll, for the month of December totaling \$947,801.04, and resolution 26-02, to cancel warrant Nos. 085562 - 085563, which were printed in error.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT

RJ Blahut of Western Aviation Services congratulated Commissioner Bill O'Neil on the election, noting that he feels it is a plus to have an aviator on the Commission, adding that he is willing to work with the Commission to advance not only the Prosser Airport, but Richland Airport as well.

Roy Keck read a prepared statement.*

Lynn Carlson read a prepared statement.**

Brian Young stated that he has been working in the clean technology economic development for many years and has been working with Diahann Howard since 2005. Young stated that Howard's accolades have been detailed throughout today's hearing. Young stated that the Port of Benton deserves strong leadership, which is exactly what it has under Howard's leadership. Young stated that he is concerned with the process the Commission is currently undertaking and asked for transparency, basic transparency that a public body should undertake. Young asked the Port Commission to release the investigation findings, which were paid for with public money, and explain the suspension of executive director Howard. Young asked if Commissioner Keller should be voting on matters involving the person who disclosed his violations.

Clif Dyer, Sundance Aviation, announced that he is a "regular Joe" and that, in his experience, Diahann Howard does not treat "Joes" very well and puts a lot of stress on tenants, including charging unfair rates. Dyer encouraged listeners to look at the leases, noting that no new-money leases have been added under Howard's tenure.

Dyer added that the private sector is no longer in lockstep with the Port and no longer trusts it. Dyer stated that people no longer want to do business with the Port of Benton.

Stephanie Bowman, former Port of Seattle Commissioner and former Washington State Maritime Industry Director, spoke in support of Director Diahann Howard. Bowman highlighted her 20+ year professional relationship with Howard and emphasized Howard's national reputation and contributions to elevating the Port of Benton and the Tri-Cities on a national stage. She referenced their recent collaboration on developing the Port's intermodal rail hub. Bowman underscored the Commission's responsibility for transparency and urged that any concerns regarding Director Howard be addressed publicly. She encouraged commissioners to consider Howard's long-standing dedication, leadership, and positive economic impact when evaluating her future with the Port.

Jen Cash spoke in support of Diahann Howard, highlighting their year-and-a-half collaboration on a major federal proposal to establish the Tri-Cities as a national nuclear innovation hub. She emphasized Howard's leadership in coordinating nine institutions, managing complex federal requirements, and keeping partners aligned on creating next-generation jobs for the region. Jen noted that Howard consistently seeks opportunities benefiting the region and is always willing to collaborate and take action. She described Howard as a dedicated and effective public servant whose leadership is vital to the region's economic future.

*Attachment A

**Attachment B

E. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

Commissioner Bill O'Neil recessed the regular Commission meeting at 8:54 a.m. and opened the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) meeting at 8:34 a.m.

1. Economic Development Corporation (EDC): Approval of Minutes from January 15, 2025, EDC Meeting, Selection of Officers, Financial Overview

A motion was made by Commissioner Scott Keller, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving the minutes from the January 15, 2025, EDC Meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Scott Keller, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving the selection of EDC officers for 2026, with Bill O'Neil serving as President, Scott Keller serving as Vice President and Lori Stevens serving as Secretary.

Commissioner Bill O'Neil adjourned the Economic Development Corporation meeting at 8:56 a.m. and reconvened the regular Commission meeting at 8:56 a.m.

2. Resolution 26-03, A Resolution of the Port of Benton Authorizing the Port Executive Director to Sell and Convey Surplus Property with Less Than \$23,340 Value

Director of Finance Alicia Myers explained that Resolution 26-03 authorizes the Port Executive Director to sell and convey surplus property with less than \$23,340 value.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Scott Keller and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving Resolution 26-03, authorizing the Executive Director to sell and convey surplus property with less than \$23,340 value.

3. Resolution 26-04, Adopting an Amended Port of Benton Personnel Policy and Procedures Handbook

Director of Finance Alicia Myers explained that Archbright's HR legal team was used to update and review the personnel policy, and most of the updates were to bring the Port up to state standards for FMLA and PFML.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Scott Keller and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving Resolution 26-04, adopting an amended Port of Benton personnel policy and procedures handbook.

4. Resolution 26-05, Lease Agreement with Hanford Mission Integration Solutions, Inc. – Richland Business Park

Director of Economic Development Audrey Burney provided an overview of the Hanford Mission Integrations Solutions, Inc. (HMIS) lease, noting they have been a Port tenant since 1998 at the 2345 Stevens Drive building.

Burney reviewed the lease agreement, which starts January 1, 2026, going through December 31, 2030, with three successive five-year terms, with this lease continuing to 2045 potentially. Burney stated that lease revenues are expected to be approximately \$9.3 million over five years, with 8.7% rent increase to the market rate.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Scott Keller and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving Resolution 26-05, a lease agreement with Hanford Mission Integration Solutions, Inc. – Richland Business Park.

5. Resolution 26-06, Richland Airport Electrical Easement for City of Richland

Airport Manager Quentin Wright explained that the approval of Resolution 26-06 grants an electrical easement across Butler Loop at Richland Airport to the City of Richland to enable future hangar development.

A motion was made by Commissioner Scott Keller, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving Resolution 26-06, approving an electrical easement at Richland Airport for the City of Richland.

6. Resolution 26-07, Approval of Amendment to Resolution 25-22, Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan

Project and Construction Manager Bryan Bell explained that Resolution 26-07 amends Resolution 25-22, which is the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan. Bell highlighted the changes:

- Increases White Bluffs Rail project cost from \$3.5 million to \$11.2 million
- Changes funding from RAISE grant to BUILD
- Adds Northwest Intermodal Project (\$240,000 from federal appropriations)

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Scott Keller and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving Resolution 26-07, approving an amendment to Resolution 25-22, the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan.

7. Resolution 26-08, Approving Amendment No. One to the Electric Vehicle Charging Towers and Ground Lease Agreement with WOW, Women of Wisdom of Tri-Cities – Richland Business Park

Director of Economic Development Audrey Burney explained that Resolution 26-08 expands the lease for EV charging stations, Women of Wisdom, Tri-Cities, from 720 to 1,080 sq ft; rent adjusted to \$10,800/year. Burney added that this agreement supports the Port's innovation and sustainability initiatives.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Scott Keller and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving Resolution 26-08, approving amendment number one to the electric vehicle charging towers and ground lease agreement with WOW, Women of Wisdom of Tri-Cities – Richland Business Park.

8. Approval of Purchase of Rail Car Counter, \$68,000

Interim Executive Director Ron Branine asked for approval to purchase a railcar counter, noting the \$68,000 includes installation and contingency. Branine noted that the equipment will track railcar traffic as required by rail agreements.

Branine clarified that the car reader can count bar codes on each car, including date and time analytics.

A motion was made by Commissioner Scott Keller, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving the purchase of a railcar counter, up to \$68,000.

9. HVAC Emergency Replacement, 2345 Stevens Drive, \$53,195 + Washington State Sales Tax – Richland Business Park

Interim Executive Director Ron Branine stated that a 25-ton unit failed last week at the 2345 Stevens Drive building due to a heat-exchanger crack. Branine noted that this particular unit has been problematic and is recommending a full replacement. Branine stated that the total cost, including sales tax, is \$57,822.97. Branine recommended replacing it as soon as possible due to the winter weather.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Scott Keller and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving the HVAC emergency replacement, 2345 Stevens Drive, \$53,195 + WSST, \$57,822.97 in the Richland Business Park.

10. Membership & Committee Review

Marketing and Communications Manager Summers Miya reviewed committee and membership assignments, including assignments for national, regional, and local associations, such as AAPA, AAEE, Chambers, Councils of Governments, Economic Development groups, etc.) The full list was reviewed and updated for 2026.

A motion was made by Commissioner Scott Keller, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving the 2026 committee and membership assignments.

11. Review Annual Conflict of Interest Form

Director of Finance Alicia Myers presented the annual conflict of interest form to the Commissioners, noting that this is an annual housekeeping item required from all staff and the Commission. Myers noted that a copy was included in the packet and on their place setting.

12. Motion to Contract for Human Resources Support Services, 60-Day Term, Not to Exceed \$50,000

Commission President Bill O’Neil requested that this motion be tabled until after the executive session. There were no objections to this request.

F. INFORMATION REPORTS

1. Grants Update

Airports – Quentin Wright stated that he will be working with Century West to plan a public meeting to discuss the Prosser Airport project. Wright stated that this meeting will likely take place in early May, as they aim to provide details to the public since the project will require airport closures.

Wright stated that the runway will be open for Memorial Day, but due to open trenches throughout the project, it will not be possible to have the airport open every weekend.

Wright stated that the Port has started the RFQ process for engineering consultants. Wright added that funds have been set aside to move forward with an appraisal on the Prosser Airport and the Port has selected Mike Fredrickson. Wright noted that the report will be shared at a future Commission meeting.

Wright stated that he has received some information from Mark Underwood, noting that Underwood is the property manager for Herb Brayton. Wright stated that the information has been placed in Brayton's file.

2. Legislative Update

Director of Governmental Affairs Cassie Losey outlined recent legislative updates, updating that a bill to classify ports as consumer-owned utilities under the Clean Energy Transformation Act has been presented, which ports are opposing due to compliance burden and inapplicability.

Losey added that support has been provided toward a federal grant matching act (MATCH Act) and economic development expansion.

Losey added that she is coordinating with regional and federal partners, particularly because of the changing legislative districts.

Losey added that Ports Day is taking place February 5-6 in Olympia, which she will be attending.

3. Capital Projects Update

Director of Facilities and Operations Ron Branine noted that the lighting project for 3250 and 2579 is in the close-out project, adding that the changes have been significant. Branine added that there is a bit more programming to complete on the project, but is very satisfied overall.

H. COMMISSIONER REPORTS/COMMENTS

Commissioner Bill O'Neil extended a thank you to the directors and staff of the Port of Benton, noting that the team has demonstrated professionalism and exceptional leadership in the last week.

O'Neil added that during the executive director's absence, the Commission has 100% confidence in Port directors and the staff's ability to execute the Port's mission and meet all of its obligations.

Commissioner Lori Stevens stated that she attended a ribbon-cutting on Monday because there is a new restaurant in Prosser. Stevens stated that the Prosser Economic Development Association had their board meeting last week and they are kicking off their leadership class. Stevens added that she will be attending the ribbon-cutting for the Prosser City Hall, which has moved at the courthouse. Stevens added that she will be attending the Prosser Community Awards at the Walter Clore Center at the end of the month.

Commissioner Scott Keller had no comments.

I. DIRECTOR REPORTS/COMMENTS

1. Finance Director

Director of Finance Alicia Myers provided a financial status report.

Myers reviewed the cash financial status, stating that the reserves and restricted bond funds remain flat. Myers stated that available cash dropped in December due to predictable year-end expense settlements.

Myers reviewed November cash receipts and disbursements.

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

Myers stated that there are no financial red flags and regular monitoring continues.

2. Port Attorney

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

3. Executive Director

Interim Executive Director Alicia Myers provided an update on recent lease administration, noting that there are approximately 13 active leases or lease modifications in progress.

Myers highlighted a joint letter regarding river maintenance structures, advocating for federal cost-sharing.

J. FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

Summers Miya pointed out that this document includes a list of upcoming meetings and events and will be included in the monthly packets for transparency.

K. EXECUTIVE SESSION

The regular Commission meeting was recessed at 9:35 a.m., with an announcement that an Executive Session would commence at 9:35 a.m. for 60 minutes to discuss personnel matters. It was noted that the regular meeting would be reconvened at 10:35 a.m.

At 10:35 a.m., it was announced that an additional 60 minutes were needed in executive session.

The regular meeting was reconvened at 11:35 a.m.

Commissioner Stevens made a motion to exempt the human resources contract from the Commission solicitation process, due to the urgency of the need. Commissioner Stevens stated that it had been determined that a competitive solicitation process is not appropriate or cost-effective. Commissioner Bill O’Neil seconded the motion and the motion was unanimously passed by the Commission.

Commissioner Bill O’Neil made a motion that the Commission delegate interim executive director duties to Ron Branine from this day, January 14, 2026, at 11:37 a.m. until further notice of this Commission. Commissioner Lori Stevens seconded the motion and the motion was unanimously passed by the Commission.

Commissioner Lori Stevens made a motion to add two regular Commission meetings, one at the end of January and one at the end of February. Commissioner Scott Keller seconded the motion and the motion was unanimously passed by the Commission.

Commission President Bill O’Neil read the Disposition of Findings.

Commissioner Bill O’Neil made a motion that no action would be taken on the finding related to finding number 1, whether Commissioner Keller violated Washington State gifting laws (Article 8, Section 7), when the Port entered into a new lease with Buckskin Golf Course on August 1, 2008. Commissioner Lori Stevens seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Commissioner Bill O’Neil commented on finding number 2, whether Commissioner Keller violated Washington State gifting laws, (Article 8, Section 7, RCW 42.23.030 or .070), by knowingly receiving public water and sewer services paid for by the Port of Benton for the hangar that he purchased in the name of his personal business, The Axe, LLC, located at 2049 Butler Loop. Commissioner O’Neil made a motion that no action would be taken related to this finding. Commissioner Stevens seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Commissioner Bill O’Neil commented on finding number 3, whether Commissioner Keller violated Washington State gifting laws (Article 8, section 7, RCW 42.23.030 or .070) when he reduced the ground lease premises area and rent rate for his hangar at 2049 Butler Loop from the amounts previously approved by the Commission.

Commissioner Bill O’Neil made a motion to direct the interim Executive Director, Ron Branine, to determine whether the Port has a current standard easement size to be applied to hangar leases. If there is no standard, then determine the average from the two neighboring hangars and apply that average to Commissioner Keller’s hangar lease. Additionally, identify the rate difference, if any, to Commissioner Keller’s current lease and make the proper adjustments to his lease. Commissioner O’Neil added that he moved to initiate a reassessment of Commissioner Keller’s lease from the start date to the present, and that Commissioner Keller be invoiced for any past-due amounts without penalties. Commissioner Lori Stevens seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Commissioner O’Neil read the investigator’s findings on Executive Director Diahann Howard’s complaints, which warrant Commission disposition.

Regarding Executive Director Howard’s complaint that Commissioner Keller violated Port Rule 12.3 when he interacted with Wally Williams in Mr. Williams’ Port office and discussed the upcoming Commissioner race and further stated that once Bill O’Neil is elected, things would change.

Commissioner Bill O’Neil stated that the Commission’s conclusion is that Commissioner Keller’s actions did violate Rule 12.3 of the Port Commission Rules of Policy and Procedure. Commissioner Bill O’Neil made a motion that the Commission admonish Commissioner Keller for violating Rule 12.3 and further move that he be instructed to review all of Resolution 24-41, the Commission’s Rules of Policy and Procedure, in particular, Rule 12.3, and to comply with it. Commissioner Lori Stevens seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Commissioner Bill O’Neil stated that the Commission is now and will continue to be committed to open and full disclosure within the laws, policies, and regulations that govern it. O’Neil stated that there are 24 complaints, of which 85% lack sufficient evidence to support them, and some are nearly two decades old. Commissioner O’Neil referenced the convenient timing of the complaints during a Port Commissioner re-election campaign and added that the parties involved have worked together for nearly 20 years.

**Commissioner Bill O’Neil made a motion to release the full investigative report, pending appropriate redactions to protect personal privacy.
Commissioner Lori Stevens seconded the motion. Motion carried.**

L. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Bill O’Neil adjourned the meeting at 11:51 a.m.

Lori Stevens, Commission Secretary

I have known Diahann Howard professionally for 18 years through my service as a Port of Benton Commissioner, as well as during my ~~18~~²⁶ years on the Utility Advisory and Economic Development Committees for the City of Richland. I am here today to share my firsthand observations and professional assessment of Diahann's performance and legacy.

Her performance has been nothing short of stellar, benefiting the Port, the City of Richland, and our entire region. Given that Diahann is currently on administrative leave and under public scrutiny, it is imperative that the public hear factual, transparent information about her performance—from the perspective of a former Commissioner with more than 18 years of service to this Port.

When Diahann took the reins of the Port in 2019, she immediately began addressing longstanding legacy issues and moved the organization in a positive, forward-looking direction. Under her leadership, the Port strengthened critical projects and economic development initiatives, including the railroad, the Inland Port, airport projects, clean energy initiatives, vertical budgeting, and overall operational management.

Her leadership was instrumental in major accomplishments such as the recruitment of Avalanche, the land sale to Atlas Agro, the development of Vintners Village, the expansion of Trididys in Prosser, and the acquisition of the 3110 Building through grant funding. She also provided the guidance and oversight necessary to ensure increased compliance with grant assurances and State Auditor's Office requirements at the airports.

In 2019, the short-line railroad was in poor condition—unsafe and at risk of shutdown. Diahann brought a clear vision, supported by Port staff, to restore the railroad as a regional asset. That vision continues today through a well-planned transformation of rail facilities, increasing the value of Port assets for the benefit of district residents.

Her consistent leadership has also been critical in modernizing Port leases, both at and beyond the airports, addressing legacy lease terms that were no longer aligned with market conditions or inflation.

Among Diahann's greatest strengths is her ability to see how the Port fits into and supports the broader regional ecosystem—particularly in economic development, job creation, transportation, rail infrastructure, and a clean energy future.

Her leadership has been recognized locally, statewide, and nationally. Examples include the property swap with the City of Richland that consolidated rail under a single entity, setting the stage for the Inland Port, and securing the Atlas Agro land deal.

She has served in key leadership roles, including Economic Development Chair for the Washington Public Ports Association; member of the Washington State Aviation Revitalization Board; board member of the Association of American Port Authorities

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Foundation; and in advisory roles with the Department of Energy and the Environmental Management Advisory Board.

Through her leadership—and the strong team she built at the Port—Diahann established a reputation for delivering projects that matter to our community and region. They are sought out as partners because they deliver. Simply put: they get it done.

January 14, 2026 - Meeting Minutes, Attachment B

Good morning. My name is Lynn Carlson, and I'm a business owner in Pasco and over the years I've been a contractor to Port of Benton, TC Research District, and Vertical on 3 separate occasions.

I'm here today to advocate for transparency and accountability and to ask the Port of Benton to behave as responsible stewards of public funds through independent decision making, objective third parties, and where those with subjectivity or conflict of interest recuse themselves from voting.

I'm advocating for consistent and fair practices that restore the public's trust in this organization with regards to the following:

The public record that shows Executive Director Howard received a raise on December 10 with no documented performance concerns then was suspended 28 days later on January 7.

Question one: What changed in those 28 days?

The public record shows that an investigation report from Schwabe Law firm on Commissioner Keller was delivered December 17- between the Executive Director raise and the suspension.

Question two: When will that report be released to the public?

The public record shows that Commissioner Keller was given an "opportunity to be heard" before any action. Executive Director Howard was not. It also shows that a January 14 vote to pay an independent HR firm \$50,000 to perform an investigation was after a suspension was already implemented prior to findings.

Question three: Why are the processes inconsistent?

I'd also like to advocate for a restorative process for these issues. There is enough domination and punishment in the world that often leaves people resentful and relationships broken. This isn't about who's right or wrong, it's about repair. A restorative process helps make things right for all impacted parties in a way that preserves dignity for everyone involved and restores trust with the public. I hope you'll answer these questions today and consider a restorative process. Thank you.

RESOLUTION 26-09

**A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMISSION OF THE PORT OF BENTON,
WASHINGTON, AMENDING SIGNERS FOR BANNER AND KEY BANKS**

WHEREAS, the Port of Benton is a municipal corporation, organized and existing under the laws of the State of Washington, RCW 53.04.010; and

WHEREAS, the Port has recently experienced staffing changes; and

WHEREAS, Banner and Key Bank require a resolution to add and remove users to the Port's accounts with Banner and Key Bank,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, BY THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE PORT OF BENTON, AS FOLLOWS:

1. Ron Branine shall be added as a signer to the Port's Banner and Key Bank accounts, to join current signers Jeff Lubeck, Alicia Myers, Diahann Howard and Angela Saraceno-Lyman.

DATED AND SIGNED at Richland, Washington, on this 28th day of January 2026.

Bill O'Neil, President

Scott D. Keller, Vice President

Lori Stevens, Secretary

RESOLUTION 26-10

**A RESOLUTION OF THE PORT OF BENTON APPROVING
A UTILITY EASEMENT EXPANSION FOR THE CITY OF
RICHLAND AT THE SANDHILL CRANE SUBSTATION**

WHEREAS, the City of Richland and Port of Benton have partnered for decades on utility projects; and

WHEREAS, the City of Richland has had an easement for the Sandhill Crane Substation on Port property west of Stevens Drive, south of Horn Rapids Road, for many years; and

WHEREAS, the City of Richland has previously requested and received easement expansions to support further development of the substation; and

WHEREAS, these past expansions have benefited both the Port and the region by increasing available power to the Richland Business Park area; and

WHEREAS, the City of Richland has now requested an additional twenty-foot-wide utility easement extending east, under the Port-owned railroad track, to the Stevens Drive railroad track; and

WHEREAS, the City of Richland has agreed to comply with all Port requirements related to boring under Port-owned track, with all boring plans subject to review by the Port and the Port’s rail operator;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Port of Benton hereby approves the requested easement expansion for the City of Richland at the Sandhill Crane Substation.

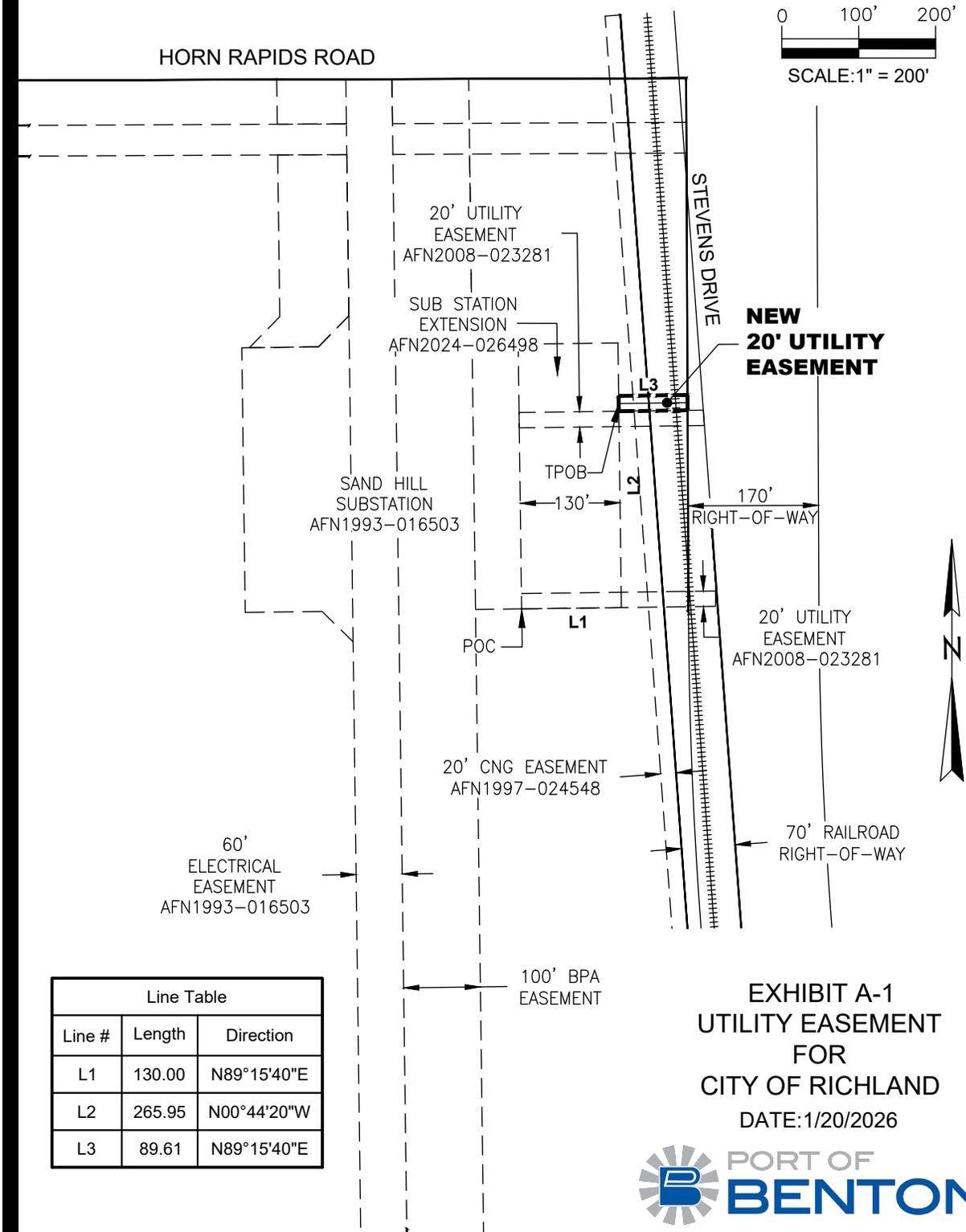
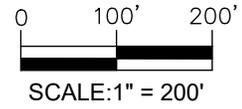
ADOPTED by the Port of Benton Commission at its regular meeting held this 28th day of January, 2026.

Bill O’Neil, President

Scott D. Keller, Vice President

Lori Stevens, Secretary

EXHIBIT PROVIDED TO
ACCOMPANY
LEGAL DESCRIPTION



HORN RAPIDS ROAD

STEVENS DRIVE

**NEW
20' UTILITY
EASEMENT**

20' UTILITY
EASEMENT
AFN2008-023281

SUB STATION
EXTENSION
AFN2024-026498

SAND HILL
SUBSTATION
AFN1993-016503

170'
RIGHT-OF-WAY

20' UTILITY
EASEMENT
AFN2008-023281

20' CNG EASEMENT
AFN1997-024548

70' RAILROAD
RIGHT-OF-WAY

60'
ELECTRICAL
EASEMENT
AFN1993-016503

100' BPA
EASEMENT

Line Table		
Line #	Length	Direction
L1	130.00	N89°15'40"E
L2	265.95	N00°44'20"W
L3	89.61	N89°15'40"E

EXHIBIT A-1
UTILITY EASEMENT
FOR
CITY OF RICHLAND
DATE: 1/20/2026



RESOLUTION 26-11

A RESOLUTION OF THE PORT OF BENTON APPROVING A POLICY TO STANDARDIZE LEASE AREAS AT BOTH THE RICHLAND AND PROSSER AIRPORTS

WHEREAS, the Port of Benton has an obligation to lease land to tenants at fair market rates and in an equitable way; and

WHEREAS, various methodologies have historically been used to determine lease area boundaries at Port of Benton airports; and

WHEREAS, the Port of Benton desires to establish consistency, clarity, and transparency in the determination of lease areas moving forward;

It is the policy of the Port of Benton to standardize lease area boundaries for airport facilities as follows:

1. **Minimum Lease Area**

Lease areas shall extend a minimum of **ten (10) feet beyond the primary exterior edges of the Lessee's structure.**

2. **Apron Area Inclusion**

Lease areas shall include **the full apron area utilized by the lessee** (but not to include any area of a public taxi lane).

3. **Controlling Standard**

When there is a difference between the minimum structure-based lease area and the apron area, **the larger of the two areas shall define that lease dimension.**

4. **Exceptions**

Adjustments to the standard lease area may be made when **physical constraints or adjacent lease boundaries prevent it.**

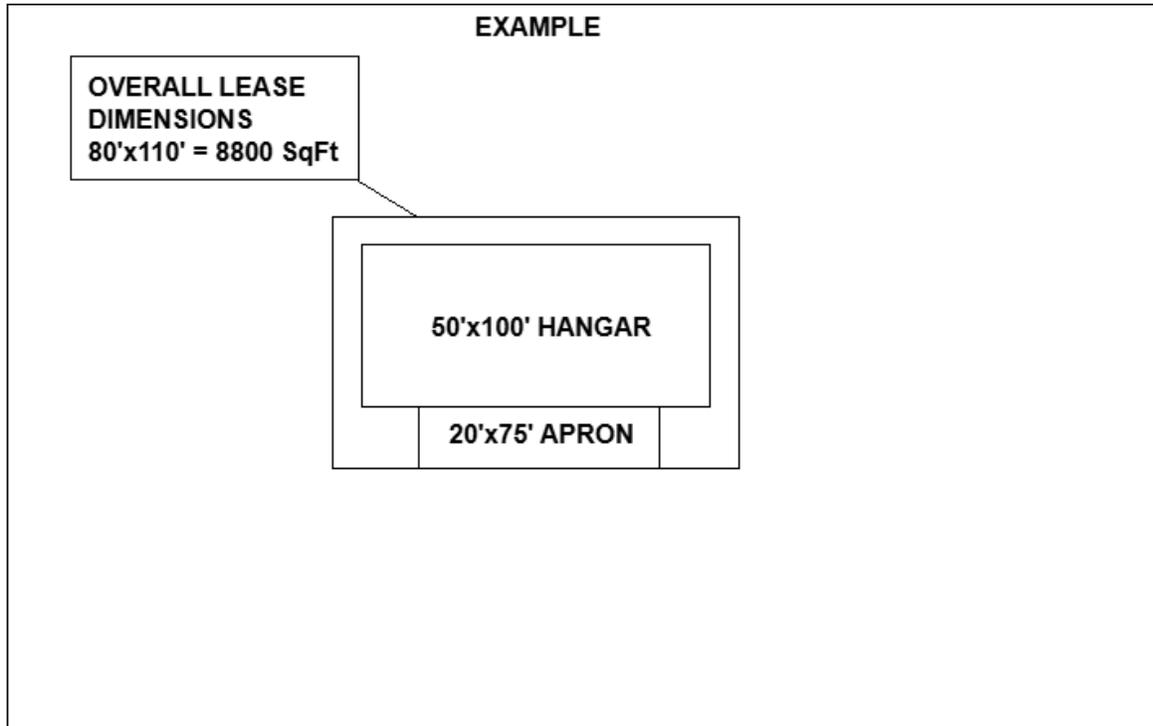
ADOPTED by the Port of Benton Commission at its regular meeting held this 28th day of January, 2026.

Bill O'Neil President

Scott D. Keller, Vice President

Lori Stevens, Secretary

EXHIBIT A



RESOLUTION NO. 26-12

**A RESOLUTION OF THE PORT OF BENTON AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF
LEASE MODIFICATION NO. 3 TO THE GROUND LEASE AGREEMENT WITH SKY
HANGARS ASSOCIATION**

WHEREAS, the Port of Benton (Port) is authorized to enter into certain leases upon such terms as the Port Commission deems proper; and

WHEREAS, the Port entered into a Ground Lease Agreement dated February 16, 1978, with G.J. Mcmillin, for property located at the Richland Airport; and

WHEREAS, the lease has been assigned to Sky Hangars Association on December 24, 1980; and

WHEREAS, the lease has been modified on two prior occasions, with the most recent modification dated February 16th, 1984; and

WHEREAS, the Port and Lessee desire to further modify the lease through Lease Modification No. 3, to update the leased premises to .64 acres (28,050 sf). See Exhibit A and Exhibit B; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE PORT OF BENTON COMMISSIONERS as follows:

1. The Interim Executive Director is hereby authorized to execute Lease Modification No. 3 to the Ground Lease Agreement with Sky Hangars Association, as set for above.
2. All other terms and conditions of the original lease and prior modifications shall remain in full force and effect.
3. This resolution shall be effective immediately upon its adoption.

ADOPTED by the Port of Benton Commissioners on this 28th day of January 2026.

Bill O'Neil, President

Scott D. Keller, Vice President

Lori Stevens, Secretary

EXHIBIT A

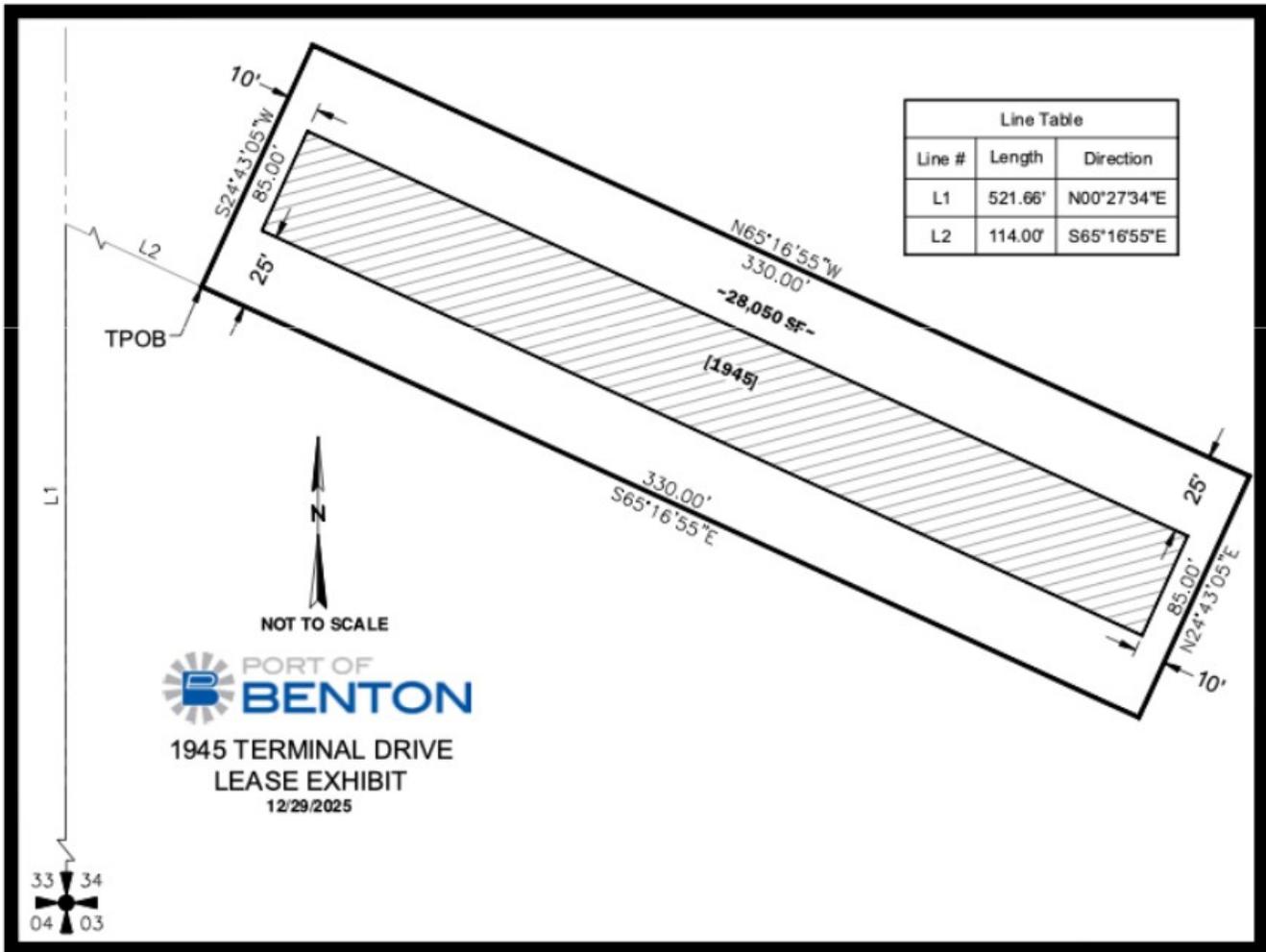


Exhibit B

LEGAL DESCRIPTION

The ground lease Premises consists of .64 acres (28,050 sf) described below and shown in Exhibit A, including the building footprint, any private-use vehicle or parking aprons, and ground area surrounding the building required to meet City Fire Code separation.

1945 TERMINAL DRIVE _ Lease Description 12/29/25

A PARCEL OF LAND SITUATED IN SECTION 34, TOWNSHIP 10 NORTH, RANGE 28 EAST, W.M., BENTON COUNTY, WASHINGTON, BEING MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:

COMMENCING AT THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF SAID SECTION 34; THENCE N00°27'34"E ALONG THE WEST LINE OF SAID SECTION 34 A DISTANCE OF 521.66 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 65°16'55" EAST A DISTANCE OF 114.00 FEET TO THE TRUE POINT OF BEGINNING;

THENCE CONTINUING SOUTH 65°16'55" EAST A DISTANCE OF 330.00 FEET; THENCE NORTH 24°43'05" EAST A DISTANCE OF 85.00 FEET; THENCE NORTH 65°16'55" WEST A DISTANCE OF 330.00 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 24°43'05" WEST A DISTANCE OF 85.00 FEET TO THE TRUE POINT OF BEGINNING.

CONTAINS 28,050 SF, MORE OR LESS