

**PORT OF BENTON
SPECIAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
April 29, 2026**

A. CALL TO ORDER: The special 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: Ron Branine, Quentin Wright, Summers Miya, Brandin Lopez, Angela Saraceno-Lyman, Stuart Dezember, Bryan Bell

ALSO PRESENT: John O'Leary, Gravis Law; Dan Hanson, Apple Valley News; Davis Raile, KNDU; Rachel Visick, TC Journal of Business; Council member Shayne VanDyke, City of Richland; Marie Noorani

The following attendees attended via remote communications: Jorge Celestino, Sheri Collins, Shaylee Nilsson, Mardie Romero, Dewey Holliday, Joe Pisca, Julia Mora, Randy Slovic, Wendy Culverwell, One Unknown Phone Number

The special 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. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Resolution 26-32, Appointment of claims for Damages Agent

- Administrative Change: Appointment of Stuart Dezember as agent for claims, replacing Angela Saraceno-Lyman.
- The change will be recorded with Benton County and updated on the website.

Commissioner Scott Keller made a motion to approve. Commissioner Lori Stevens seconded the motion, and it was unanimously passed by the Commission.

2. Resolution 26-33, A Resolution of The Port of Benton Amending Signers for Banner and Key Banks.

- Administrative update: Adding Stuart Dezember and removing Jeff Lubeck from bank signatories.
- The April 29, 2026, special meeting provided an opportunity to expedite the banking administrative processes, which otherwise would not allow the addition of Dezember to the Port's accounts until after the June meeting.
- The auditor confirmed that this aligns with normal business practices.

Commissioner Lori Stevens made a motion to approve. Commissioner Scott Keller seconded the motion, and it was unanimously passed by the Commission.

D. CONVENE EXECUTIVE SESSION

The special meeting was recessed at 8:35 a.m. It was announced that an Executive Session would commence at 8:35 a.m. and would reconvene at 9:05 a.m. to discuss matters relating to agency enforcement actions, litigation or potential litigation and legal risks – RCW 42.30.110(1)(g).

The special meeting was reconvened at 9:05 a.m.

E. POST EXECUTIVE SESSION ACTION

The Commission, on the advice of counsel, moves to temporarily pause the first investigation into employee complaints against Diahann Howard and pause the second investigation into Executive Director Howard's claim of retaliation.

Both Investigations will be revisited pending the Washington State Supreme Court's decision on recall petitions which are being decided on an expedited basis, with a decision expected in the near term.

Commissioner Bill O'Neil made a motion to authorize the pause; Commissioner Scott Keller seconded the motion, and it was unanimously passed by the Commission.

K. ADJOURNMENT: The Special meeting was adjourned at 9:07 a.m.



Lori Stevens, Commission Secretary