

PORT OF BENTON
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
June 10, 2026

- A. **CALL TO ORDER:** The regular monthly meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. at 3250 Port of Benton Blvd. Richland, WA 99354.

PRESENT: Commissioner Scott D. Keller, Commissioner Bill O’Neil, Commissioner Lori Stevens

PORT STAFF PRESENT: Ron Branine, Quentin Wright, Summers Miya, Audrey Burney, Bryan Bell, Brandin Lopez, Stuart Dezember, Jorge Celestino

ALSO PRESENT: John O’Leary, Gravis Law; Mark Underwood, Richland Airport; Jon Ray, Richland Airport; Shane Van Dyke, City of Richland

The following attendees attended via remote communications: Wendy Culverwell, Tri-City Herald; Bryan Condon, Century West Engineering; Angela Sarceno-Lyman, Shaylee Nilsson, Mardie Romero, Christy Rasmussen, Sheri Collins

The Commission meeting was noticed as required by RCW 42.30.070.

- B. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Commissioner Bill O’Neil led those present to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. **CONSENT AGENDA**

Approval of Agenda – Staff are asking to amend the agenda and remove the items of business numbers 8 & 9.

A motion was made by Commissioner Scott Keller seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens and unanimously passed by the Commission, approving the amended agenda for the June 10, 2026, Commission meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens seconded by Scott Keller and unanimously passed by the Commission approving the minutes from the May 13, 2026, Commission meeting, approval of minutes from the May 28, 2026, Special Commission meeting, approval of vouchers and certifications, including payroll for the month of May, totaling \$978,899.95, acceptance of work to Quicksilver Audio, LTD, Walter Clore AV System replacement project, \$70,633.29.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT

Jon Ray made a public comment regarding the second annual Aviation Day and Career Fair, held at Richland Airport on Saturday, May 30, stating that attendance nearly doubled to just under 400. Boeing Engineering participated, and Commissioner O'Neil presented engineering careers. Ray had high praise for the staff, particularly Summers Miya (publications and on-site presence) and Quentin Wright (Logistics). Ray requested continued annual support, noting the significant youth engagement, strong support and engagement from Commissioners.

E. PUBLIC HEARING

Commission president Bill O'Neil recessed the regular Commission meeting at 8:34 a.m.

Commissioner Bill O'Neil opened the public hearing at 8:34 a.m.

1. Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for years 2027-2032

Engineering and Capital Development Senior Manager, Brandin Lopez, explained that the purpose of the TIP is a State-required annual update for eligibility in State/Federal funding.

Lopez reviewed the current projects noted on the proposed Six-Year TIP:

1. Improvements to Waterfront Drive North of University Drive
2. Larson Road – Battelle Blvd. to Horn Rapids Road
3. Horn Rapids Road Extension (from east end of Horn Rapids to Barge Facility) and Improvements to Barge Facility
4. South Richland Rail Transload Facility (Adjacent to SR 240 – Inland Asphalt)
5. 1st Street West – Stevens Drive West 1,500 ft to Railroad Tracks
6. Snyder Street – Stevens Drive to Robertson Road, Including Rail Crossing
7. Extend Railroad into the 1,341-Acre Industrial Park
8. Rail Crossing Maintenance Improvements – Replace Crossings at Jadwin Ave., Steptoe Street, Battelle Blvd. and Horn Rapids Road
9. White Bluffs Rail – Rail and Tie Replacement – Replace Track in Wye and in 3 Miles of Elevated Curves and on Approximately 5 Miles of Tangent Track
10. Barge Facility Improvements

Lopez reviewed the approval process, noting the annual submission to the Council of Governments for compliance/grant application.

Commissioner Bill O'Neil closed the public hearing at 8:39 a.m.

Commissioner Bill O'Neil reconvened the regular Commission meeting at 8:39 a.m.

F. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Resolution 26-36, the Port of Benton's Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program for the Years 2027-2032 Inclusive

A motion was made by Commissioner Scott Keller, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission; Resolution 26-36, a resolution of the Port of Benton's Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program for the years 2027-2032 inclusive.

2. Resolution 26-37, A Resolution of the Port of Benton Authorizing an Agreement Between the Washington State Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB) for Aid in Financing the Costs of Improvements for the 2579 Stevens Drive and New Office Facilities Related Thereto, Richland Business Park

Construction Project Manager, Bryan Bell, reported that the completed step initiated in 2025 allows the Port to make a \$2.4 million loan with 3% interest. Bell noted that the loan finalization will take place at the July 17 CERB board meeting with only one requirement outstanding.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Scott Keller, and unanimously passed by the Commission approving Resolution 26-37, authorizing agreement between the Washington State Community Economic Revitalization Board for aid in financing costs of improvements for the 2579 Stevens Dr. and new office facilities – Richland Business Park.

3. Resolution 26-38, A Resolution of the Port of Benton Authorizing an Amendment to Contract for Railroad Services Related to Trackage Rights and Car Charge

Engineering and Capital Development Senior Manager Brandin Lopez reported a major milestone for the Port after years of delay, stating that the amended car charge agreement is ready for signatures. Lopez highlighted several key provisions including a \$71 railcar trackage maintenance fee, retroactive to October 2025.

Lopez stated that a Docusign signature is pending but marked the progress as significant. Lopez added that coordination with Union Pacific, BNSF, and the City of Richland regarding an interlocal agreement and DOE licensing for North Horn Rapids is expected within a month. Lopez clarified that the car counter hardware is installed, and software/data validation commences next week; it will support improved data and future revenue calculations. It was noted that the budget for the project was \$440,000 (2024) and \$660,000 (2025), with no collections until now.

Commissioner Keller credited Lopez for successfully pushing for a resolution in his first 90 days back at the Port.

A motion was made by Commissioner Scott Keller, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission to approve Resolution 26-38, authorizing the Port to approve an amendment to contract for railroad services related to trackage rights and car charges.

4. Resolution 26-39, A Resolution of the Port of Benton Commission authorizing a Lease Amendment and Modification Agreement with Colleen B. Cook for Property Located at the Richland Airport Skypark

Director of Economic Development, Audrey Burney, stated that this resolution requests a one-year extension on the lease for Colleen Cook to July 27, 2027, to allow time for the right of first refusal process, property valuation, and disposition discussions.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Scott Keller, and unanimously passed by the Commission, authorizing a lease amendment and modification agreement with Colleen B. Cook for property located at the Richland Airport Skypark.

5. Resolution 26-40, A Resolution of the Port of Benton Authorizing a Lease Amendment and Modification Agreement with Verdon LLC for Property Located at the Richland Airport Skypark – Trade Center
Director of Economic Development, Audrey Burney, stated that this resolution requests a one-year extension on the lease to July 27, 2027, to allow time for the right of first refusal process, property valuation, and disposition discussions.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Scott Keller, and unanimously passed by the Commission, authorizing a lease amendment and modification agreement with Verdon, LLC for property located at the Richland Airport Skypark – Trade Center.

6. Resolution 26-41, A Resolution of the Port of Benton Commission Authorizing a Lease Amendment and Modification Agreement with Verdon LLC for Property Located at the Richland Airport Skypark – Azurdata Center

Director of Economic Development, Audrey Burney, stated that this resolution requests a one-year extension on the lease to July 27, 2027, to allow time for the right of first refusal process, property valuation, and disposition discussions.

A motion was made by Commissioner Scott Keller, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission, authorizing a lease amendment and modification agreement with Verdon, LLC for property located at the Richland Airport Skypark – Azurdata Center

7. Resolution 26-42, A Resolution of the Port of Benton Approving the Third Amendment of the Purchase and Sale Agreement Between Pacific Green Fertilizer (Atlas Agro) and the Port of Benton.

Director of Economic Development Audrey Burney reviewed the ongoing land sale with Atlas Agro, which has been going on since March 2023, with two prior amendments. Burney explained that the current amendment extends the pre-development period to July 31, 2027, which aligns closing with project investment decisions; further extensions require commissioner approval. Burney noted that justification is needed for time due to regulatory, tariff, supply chain, and federal power interconnection complexities.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Scott Keller, and unanimously passed by the Commission approving the third amendment of the purchase and sale agreement between Pacific Green Fertilizer (Atlas Agro) and the Port of Benton.

8. Resolution 26-45, A Resolution Authorizing the Port of Benton to Accept Multiple Grants from the Federal Aviation Administration to Fund Construction Services Related to the Richland Airport Apron Reconfiguration Project, Richland Airport

Airport Manager, Quentin Wright, details accepting two FAA grants (AIP and AIG) for apron reconfiguration. Expiring AIP dollars being maximized, and bids are returned competitively.

A motion was made by Commissioner Scott Keller, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission approving the acceptance of multiple grants from the Federal Aviation Administration to fund construction services related to the Richland Airport Apron Reconfiguration project.

9. Resolution 26-46, A Resolution Authorizing Execution of a Contract with Granite Construction Company for the Richland Airport Apron Reconfiguration Project, Richland Airport.

Airport Manager Quentin Wright addressed the low bid of under \$1M, covering the full project scope with a mid-August start date.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Scott Keller, and unanimously passed by the Commission to approve authorizing execution of a contract with Granite Construction Co. for the Richland Airport Apron Reconfiguration project, Richland Airport.

10. Resolution 26-47, A Resolution of the Port of Benton to Award the Richland Apron Reconfiguration Construction Services, Richland Airport.

Airport Manager Quentin Wright explained that Resolution 26-47 authorizes the Port of Benton to award the Richland Apron Reconfiguration Construction Services project to Century West.

A motion was made by Commissioner Scott Keller, seconded by Commissioner Lori Stevens, and unanimously passed by the Commission approving Resolution 26-47, authorizing the Port of Benton to award the Richland Apron Reconfiguration Construction Services to Century West Engineers.

11. Contract Amendment with Gravis Law, PLLC

Interim Executive Director Ron Branine stated that a contract amendment is needed for the port contract with Gravis Law, noting that the original contract was for \$175,000 and requesting an increase of \$100,000 to \$275,000 (not to exceed through 2026).

A motion was made by Commissioner Lori Stevens, seconded by Commissioner Scott Keller, and unanimously passed by the Commission to approve a contract amendment for Gravis Law, PLLC.

G. INFORMATION REPORTS

1. Grants Update

Engineering and Capital Development Senior Manager Brandin Lopez provided an update on grant projects:

Commerce, CRISi and BUILD grant negotiations are ongoing; more progress is expected July/August. Working through details for formal obligations.

2. Capital Projects Update:

- **Prosser Airport Project**

Airport Manager Quentin Wright combined (#3 Airports Report) with the capital projects report and updated that the Prosser Airport project is nearly complete; the pilot lighting system is complete, pending an antenna and the pavement markings are scheduled after a 30-day cure.

- **Port of Benton Blvd. Repavement Project**

Project Manager Bryan Bell stated that the pavement rehab from University Drive to 9th Street will be 100% complete after final striping.

- **Parking Lot Resurfacing**

Bell stated that multiple locations are 100% complete, with complete parking lot resurfacing completed at 3250, 3190 and the Prosser Wine & Food Park.

- **Roofing Coating Projects**

Bell stated that the 2579 Stevens Drive building is scheduled to be finished this upcoming Friday.

Bell noted that the 1901 building at the Richland Airport was delayed due to weather, expected to be completed next week.

- **Richardson Road Chip Seal**

Bell added that the Richardson Road Chip Seal project is moving forward, with scheduling and coordination taking place now.

- **2501 Stevens Dr. – New Building Construction**

Bell overviewed the layout design for the new office space slated for Port tenant, Barnhart. Bell reviewed the design and pointed out some of the features, including a common conference/small office for Port satellite operations, six 1,000 sq. ft. flex-space bays (shell finish for tenant flexibility), and the possibility of expanding by four additional bays to the north. Bell added that the total size and cost – 12,551 sq. ft.; average \$317/sq. ft. total is just under \$4M (under the \$5.2M budget). Funding would be a CERB loan (\$2.409M), Port Funds (\$1.74M), and potential Port match for balance.

4. Crow Butte Update

Interim Executive Director Ron Branine reported that reservations are up 59% from last year with \$71K in expected revenue, adding that revenue in 2025 was \$154K.

Branine added that the Parking box daily returns are down, but annual passes are up.

Branine added that park occupancy is 100% on the weekends, 75-80% on weekdays, with the peak season nearly at max capacity.

H. DIRECTOR REPORTS/COMMENTS

1. Real Estate

Director of Economic Development Audrey Burney provided a real estate update, noting that there are 13 active leases/amendments, 11 rental prospects and four land prospects.

Burney added that there are a few tenant transitions, including the Rao Group lease, which has been terminated, which has led to Tri-Cities Testing expanding.

2. Marketing

Marketing and Communications Manager Summers Miya stated that she attended the WPPA Spring Meeting at Skamania Lodge in May, noting that she serves as co-chair on the Communications Committee and the focus at the committee meeting was ADA website compliance and community relations. Miya shared that she shared the draft community outreach commercials at the meeting.

Miya also overviewed the committee's recent Lunch & Learn, which focused on CTE programs in schools.

Miya stated that she returned to host the third Thursday Triton tour on May 21, which was at capacity, as is the June tour. Miya thanked Mardie Romero for the support with the tours.

Miya stated that she assisted, along with Airport Manager Quentin Wright, with the Aviation Career Day and participated in the event on May 30. Miya added that she has assisted with various projects for both airport projects, including signage and weekly updates for the Prosser project, which were issued via eNewsletter and posted on the Prosser Airport project page.

Miya thanked the entire team for the support received for the Robert Larson event.

Miya added that she spent most of the day, this past Monday, with Prosser and Richland Airport tenant, Precision Aviation Solutions, who has worked with American Cruise Lines to offer a tour itinerary that consists of helicopter tours of the Hanford site. Miya noted that Precision Aviation Solutions will be featured in a future Opportunity Happens Here tenant spotlight.

Miya added that she has plans to complete the community outreach campaign video shooting at Crow Butte Park on June 23 and is working on launching the campaign in the coming weeks.

Miya added that work has begun on the tenant appreciation BBQ, which will take place on Thursday, August 6 at the Clore Center in Prosser.

Miya added that the Port participates in the Manhattan Project National Historical Park committee, stating that the entire region has been designated as an American WWII Heritage City and all jurisdictions throughout the region will receive a selection of 18" x 18" signs with the American WWII Heritage City logo to place throughout their jurisdiction.

Miya overviewed activity since the May meeting, including two press releases (Director of Finance, Stuart Dezember and the 2026 Budget Update) and a media release (Larson Ceremony).

Miya thanked Mardie Romero for her assistance with Crow Butte and Vintners Village social media posting, noting the push to share more on each platform.

Miya added that the internal employee hub is nearing completion and looks forward to sharing with the team a one-stop shop for all current documents.

3. Port Attorney

Port Attorney, John O’Leary, stated that he had no items for the regular session but will have items for the executive session.

4. Finance Director

Director of Finance, Stuart Dezember, provided an update on several finance-related projects, including the 2025 annual report, which was submitted on May 29, ahead of the May 30 deadline. Dezember added that there will be two required audits required by September 30, including the financial and federal single audit, which is required due to \$1M in federal funds. Dezember added that an accountability audit will follow.

Dezember noted that a pre-audit meeting was held to discuss the scope and risks, and a formal auditor entrance meeting will likely be held in the next two weeks.

5. Interim Executive Director

Ron Branine, Interim Executive Director, stated that he continues to meet regularly with staff, commissioners and partners, adding that he has participated in numerous real estate meetings, facility meetings and attended the Bob Larson event.

Branine added a special thanks to Marketing & Communications Manager, Summers Miya on her leadership for pulling off another great event. Branine thanked Mardie, Shaylee, Quentin and the entire facilities team for everyone’s contributions for making it such a great event.

Branine stated that the Northwest Seaport Alliance will be in town next week, and he will be meeting with them, along with Brandin Lopez. Branine noted that it will be a quick introduction and a tour, with the hopes of a more in-depth meeting later. Branine added that he attended the Aviation Career Day at Richland Airport, which was a great success, and he will be attending the Prosser Flag & Flight festival this Saturday.

I. COMMISSIONER REPORTS/COMMENTS

Commissioner Bill O’Neil expressed deep gratitude for the Bob Larson event organization, teamwork, project completion, and positive momentum. O’Neil thanked Summers, Quentin, Jorge, Mardie, Shaylee and the entire facilities team for a well-organized and executed event. O’Neil complimented Commissioner Keller’s great stories during his remarks.

O'Neil stated that he attended the Washington Airport Managers Association (WAMA) with Airport Manager Quentin Wright. O'Neil overviewed some of the key issues in airport law; FAA Discussion on hangar reversions; WSDOT will be putting together a rate and fee report for all airports in Washington State; FAA continues to address whether Washington State is or is not in compliance with Aviation fuel tax revenues; FAA civil penalties could be up to \$1.5B.

O'Neil added that the North American Trainers Association (NATA) formation clinic at Richland Airport was a huge success, and all are committed to return next year (June 2-4, 2027).

O'Neil included some stats from the clinic weekend, stating that 2,500 gallons of fuel were sold, 25 Hotel Rooms, 15 Rental Cars, 300 hours of flight training, 10 hours of ground training and a \$40,000 positive local impact.

O'Neil stated that Aviation Career Day was recognized as a recruitment pipeline with plans to expand scope/integration next year. O'Neil thanked Jon Ray for organizing.

O'Neil stated that the Dauntless Air Fire Bosses will be arriving in Richland for the summer, adding that it is a great opportunity to bring the family and come to meet the crew; they love to show off the planes and how they work.

O'Neil expressed deep gratitude for the Bob Larson event organization, teamwork, project completion, and positive momentum.

Commissioner Scott Keller thanked the staff for hosting the Bob Larson ceremony.

Commissioner Lori Stevens thanked the staff for hosting the Bob Larson ceremony and added that the Prosser Flag & Flight Festival will be taking place at the Prosser Airport this weekend.

J. EXECUTIVE SESSION

The regular Commission meeting was recessed at 9:29 a.m., with an announcement that an Executive Session would commence at 9:30 a.m. for 45 minutes under RCW 42.30.110(c), (f), (g) and (l) to discuss real estate, evaluate personnel and to discuss potential litigation/legal risks with Port counsel. It was noted that the regular meeting would be reconvened at 10:15 a.m.

The regular meeting was reconvened at 10:15 a.m.

Commissioner Bill O'Neil clarified a few items, noting that now that the water utility report is out, the Commission would like to move forward and look into options to provide the infrastructure necessary for each hangar to work with the city to get water and sewer services. O'Neil requested staff to look into what that will take to complete.

Commissioner Bill O'Neil made a motion to publish the Port of Benton Richland Airport Utility Committee Report, dated May 11, 2026. Commissioner Lori Stevens seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Commissioner O'Neil stated that he would like to put a few things on the record related to Dr. Eileen Griffin-Ray's credentials:

- Griffin-Ray issued two substantial reports based on a three-month assessment
- Griffin-Ray drafted 12 human resources policies, some which have already been approved

- Griffin-Ray wrote many checklists, aiding in hiring and managing work scope tasks
- Revised, and in many cases, helped create new or missing job descriptions
- Provided many hours of professional leadership and management council to Commissioners and staff
- Assisted in the posting, screening and interview process for three new Port employees
- While her contract was not to exceed \$50,000, the actual cost was less than half that figure
- We are grateful for Eileen for her experience, knowledge, and support to the port.

O'Neil added that if anyone is interested in becoming a manager, he highly recommends her book, which is available on Amazon. O'Neil stated that if you think you have what it takes to be a leader, this book will help you determine that.

Commissioner Bill O'Neil made a motion to publish the "Exit Report Addendum to Organizational Analysis" by Eileen Griffin-Ray, dated April 2026. Commissioner Scott Keller seconded the motion. Motion carried.

K. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Bill O'Neil adjourned the meeting at 10:19 a.m.


Lori Stevens, Commission Secretary