



COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

MAY 22, 2024
100 E. STREET
COLUMBIA CITY, OREGON 97018

The Port of Columbia County held a Board meeting at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, May 22, 2024, at the Port office and via Zoom (*) video conferencing with the following present:

Commissioners

Robert Keyser	President
Chip Bubl	Secretary
Nancy Ward	2nd Vice President

Guests

Tammy Maygra	Deer Island
Paul Langner	Rainier
Bob Gadotti	Scappoose
Howard Blumenthal	Scappoose Bay Marina Advisory Committee
Ralph Culpepper	Scappoose
Brady Preheim	St. Helens

Staff

Sean P. Clark	Executive Director
Robert Salisbury	Port General Counsel
Guy Glenn, Jr.	Executive Finance Manager
Miriam House	Operations Manager
Elizabeth Millager	Operations Coordinator
Elliot Levin	North County Ops. & Terminal Mgr.
Gina Sisco	Comm. & External Affairs Mgr.
Christa Burns	Administrative Assistant II
Lacey Tolles	Data Res. & Projects Specialist / Interim Airport Manager
Susan Tolleshaug*	Administrative Assistant
Brittany Scott *	Finance Assistant
Sydell Cotton *	Assistant Finance Manager

President Robert Keyser called the Port of Columbia County Commission Meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. Commissioners Bubl, Ward and Keyser were present. Commissioners Sorber and Fawcett were absent.

Additions To Agenda

Robert Keyser asked the Commission if there were any additions to the agenda. There were no additions. Mr. Keyser stated that any long-term agenda items requiring more discussion will wait until there is a full Commission, but any time-sensitive items will be addressed at the meeting.

Comments From the Public

Tammy Maygra stated the Port should not initiate the tax and that Next Energy (NEXT) should be held accountable for their rent payments.

Howard Blumenthal, Vice Chair of the Marina Advisory Committee, made the disclaimer that his comments do not represent the viewpoints of the Committee. Mr. Blumenthal stated that he is unsure where he stands on reimposing the Port tax. He objected to raising the rates at the marina and suggested the Port adjust the price for parking based on size and weight of the vehicle. He said he is unsure how much longer the marina will be viable with more people and larger boats and mentioned the possibility of building a new facility further down the bay. His stance is to either increase fees or impose the tax, but not both. With the marina usage being more widespread, he is concerned it may become less user-friendly for our local citizens.

Paul Langner stated that since the Budget Committee meeting on May 8, he had received six phone calls about the Port reconsidering the tax. Mr. Langer stated that five of those six callers said the Port should act self-sufficient and surrender taxing authority. Mr. Langner addressed



this by referencing ORS 777.430 to 777.510 which indicates the importance of ports having the ability to tax. He stated that foregoing the tax would not only affect the credit rating of the Port, but also the credit rating of the County and the Port's bonding authority. Impacting matters such as credit rating, bonding authority, and borrowing capacity would also limit certain long-term grant opportunities. Mr. Langner encouraged the Port to reinstate the tax and dedicate it to public waterways access across the entire Port district while keeping the Port's fiscal responsibility intact for bonding ability.

Brady Preheim objected to the evening meeting being rescheduled to a morning meeting. He stated that all Commissioners know the meeting schedule and need to show up or resign. Mr. Preheim also objected to the short public comment period. He suggested the Port focus on cost-cutting and charging NEXT for their full lease. He also pointed out that every tax measure on the most recent election failed, which is a clear indication that people are against being taxed. Mr. Preheim said he would not be opposed to bringing back the Port tax if it were put toward public access and NEXT was held accountable for what they owe.

Ralph Culpepper expressed his opposition to the Port tax and encouraged the Port to work harder on filling the buildings and growing its gross revenues.

Old Business

Port Tax: Why It is Needed

Executive Director, Sean P. Clark presented a PowerPoint to provide information for the Commission to consider in deciding whether to impose the Port tax for the 2024-25 fiscal year. Commissioner Keyser announced that no decision will be made at the meeting today, and the vote will take place at the next Commission meeting on June 12. Mr. Clark recommended the Commission impose the full amount of the Port tax at \$0.0886 per \$1,000 of assessed value and stated that imposing the tax is an investment in the future of the Port. After hearing a budget presentation at the May 8, 2024 Budget Committee public meeting and seeing the full financial picture of the Port, all five citizen members of the Budget Committee recommended imposing a Port tax of \$0.04 per \$1,000 of assessed value. Mr. Clark explained that the three main reasons the Commission should vote to support the tax are to maintain existing properties and infrastructure, to diversify our revenue stream, and to improve public waterway access. Mr. Clark stated that the Scappoose Bay Marine Park operates at a loss every year and the current cost of dredging is over \$2.7 million. Public waterway access and continued capital investment at the marina is unsustainable without public funding. According to recent figures from the Columbia County Tax Assessor, a tax rate of \$0.04 per \$1,000 would yield \$226,318 in annual revenue. A tax rate of \$0.0886 per \$1,000 would yield \$501,296 annually. The Port tax has a significant impact over time and would yield approximately \$1.9 million over a period of four years and \$5 million over 10 years. The Port of Columbia County is the only Oregon public port that does not impose a tax. Significant changes have also taken place since 2020 including a \$29 million seismic dock upgrade at Port Westward, \$20 million in site cleanup at Railroad Avenue, and \$3 million in dredging costs at the marina. Additionally, private security in 2023 and 2024 for Trestle Beach costs over \$50,000 while the Port charges no fees for public access to Trestle Beach. The Port tax revenue would fund improvements to public waterway access at properties like Scappoose Bay Marine Park and Trestle Beach. As part of the proposed FY 2024-25 Budget, the property tax levy assessment must be approved by the Port Commission before it is adopted and then voted on at the June 12 meeting.



New Business

Resolution 2024-08

APPROVING WESTSIDE PAVEMENT MAINTENANCE CENTURY WEST SCOPE OF WORK
Lacey Tolles, Interim Airport Manager, presented Resolution 2024-08 for approval of the Westside Pavement Maintenance Phase II Scope of Work. Ms. Tolles informed the Commission that in 2023 the Port worked with airport engineer Century West to prepare a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Airport Improvement Program grant application. The grant was awarded to the Port for a 90% reimbursement. Following approval of Resolution 2024-08 the Port will open an Invitation to Bid (ITB).

Nancy Ward moved; Chip Bubl seconded a motion to adopt Resolution 2024-08. The motion carried unanimously, 3-0.

Donations Policy Discussion

Gina Sisco, Communications and External Affairs Manager shared the Port's current Donations Policy that was adopted in 2002 and amended through Resolution 2009-13. The Commission made a request to review the Port's Donations Policy and discuss the possibility of a revision. The discussion was tabled until the next meeting when all Commissioners are present.

Supporting Columbia River Anchorages

Elliot Levin, North County Terminal and Operations Manager, came forward to ask the Commission to support the Port writing a letter in favor of the U.S. Coast Guard's (USCG) effort to establish federally designated anchorages at Crim's Island, Port Westward (PWW) and Rice Island. This effort is supported by maritime organizations such as the Columbia River Steamship Operators Association (CRSOA) and the Maritime Fire and Safety Association (MFSA). The MFSA leads and coordinates responses on the Columbia River. In addition, river operators and service providers such as Shaver, Foss, various ship agencies, ports, Columbia River Pilots (COLRIP), Columbia River Bar Pilots, and others are supporting this effort. Mr. Levin explained that the increasing vessel size in the Columbia River Channel makes it necessary to create additional anchorages where vessels can wait for weather, tides, berths, and to anchor during an emergency. These anchorages provide a place of refuge with sufficient depth and keep the navigational channel clear. Mr. Levin noted that all three anchorages have been used since 2016 without being federally designated. The PWW anchorage is the farthest place down river where vessels can safely turn around before reaching Astoria. There have been no reported incidents or complaints related to vessels using the PWW anchorage. Increasing USCG oversight, prioritizing commercial vessel usage, and allowing the installation of stern buoys are some advantages of the federal designation. Currently, larger vessels must use standby tugs which would no longer be necessary if there were stern buoys. Eliminating the need for standby tugs would save monies and provide environmental benefits. Mr. Levin would like the Commission to authorize a letter of support in favor of this project. Comments are due by June 7, 2024. Nancy Ward asked why standby tugs are needed. Mr. Levin responded that they help to avoid the large vessels swinging into the channel due to having only one bow anchor. Mr. Keyser added that stern buoys work well in Rainier. The Commission came to consensus to proceed with a letter in support from the Port.



Executive Director's Report

Provided and read by Sean Clark. The Executive Director's Report is on file at the Port Office. Mr. Clark announced that a renewable diesel vessel will be arriving at Port Westward on May 23. The Port is still working with the Moore Rd. contractors at Scappoose Airport to install conduit for lighting and an 8-inch gas line along Airport Rd. for future development. The Port has a meeting set up with ORPET to discuss a preliminary enforcement notice. Lignetics in Columbia City received an unannounced inspection from DEQ a couple weeks ago. Lignetics and the Port are working together on some deferred maintenance items as well as reducing the sawdust. The Port received the \$2.6 million insurance settlement that is going into a dedicated account for the Railroad Avenue site cleanup. Mr. Clark will be attending the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA) Summer Conference in Clarkson, WA in June. He also announced the Port will have a booth at Citizens Day in the Park in St. Helens on June 22, Columbia County Fair and Rodeo on July 18, and the Columbia City Celebration on August 10.

Commissioner Reports

Chip Bubl stated he did not have much to report since the last meeting except that he has continued to review the budget.

Nancy Ward announced that the Agricultural Information Committee meeting scheduled for Monday, May 20 was cancelled, so there will not be another meeting until July. However, there is work going on behind the scenes and there will be more to come.

Robert Keyser commented that he is open to discussion on the Port tax. Mr. Keyser affirmed that the Port's public speaking times have not changed in many years. He announced that the next Port Commission meeting will be on June 12.

Executive Session

Port General Counsel, Robert Salisbury announced that Executive Session was listed on the agenda, but the Commission decided there will be no Executive Session.

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS BEFORE THE COMMISSION, THE MEETING
ADJOURNED AT 9:13 A.M.**



President

June 12, 2024

Date Adopted by Commission



Secretary