

League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Port of Whitman County Commission Meeting

Date: February 6, 2020

Observer Reporting: Carolyn Joswig-Jones

Length of Meeting: 1' 10"

Members Present/Absent:

Commissioners: John E. Love (District 1), Kristine Meyer (District 2), Tom Kammerzell (District 3)
Joe Poire - Executive Director, Kara Riebold – Chief Operating Officer, Debbie Snell - Properties and Development Manager, Brenda Stav -Communications Director, Doug Getz - Port Maintenance Technician, Bruce Ensley - Port Attorney

Others Present (i.e., media, public):

Victoria Fowler (Gazette)

Sarah McKnight (SEWEDA-Southeast Washington Economic Development Association)

*Below, cut and pasted, are segments of the Agenda and supportive materials supplied by the Port in **Black**.*

*My additional comments are in **Red**.*

*Potential areas of interest to LWV are in **Green***

To view FULL **Meeting Agenda, Minutes and all supportive materials** follow this link:

<http://www.portwhitman.com/about/commissionmeeting>

Port meeting calendar: http://www.portwhitman.com/pdf/Port_Calendar_2020.01.01-2020.06.30_Revised.pdf

Old Business

- **Boyer Park Roofing Project Update** (no written update)- **Approved \$20,993 for main bathroom project**
- **Policy Project–Resolution 89-9 Wilma Volunteer Firemen** – **voted that 89-9 no longer relevant**
- **Policy Project–Resolution 11-06 Purchasing and Contracting** – **replaced with Resolution 20-05**
- **Lower Snake River Resolution Project Update** –

“SUBJECT: Snake River Dams Resolution Project and related WPPA letter to Gov. Inslee

Background

As the first step in a project to have the port districts in the state adopt resolutions in support of the Lower Snake River Dams (LSRD), the Port of Whitman adopted Resolution 19-09 on August 15, 2019. The next step was to work with WPPA on the concept. WPPA ultimately determined that a letter to Gov. Inslee addressing the relationship between the dams and a proactive climate policy would be the approach to garner support from a higher number of port districts. WPPA submitted the letter to the Governor in late January. The Port has requested a copy of that letter and it will be provided to the commission as soon as possible.

The intent was to synchronize submission of the WPPA letter with the resolutions adopted by port districts but now the resolutions will be submitted separately.

The following ports have adopted resolutions in support of the LSRD and have provided a copy for inclusion:

Port of Chinook, Port of Clarkston, Port of Columbia, Port of Grandview, Port of Ilwaco

Next Steps

Port of Othello, Port of Skamania, County Port of Whitman, County Port of Woodland

Week of February 10: The executive director will follow up with ports that have not responded. Week of March 2: Submit resolutions to the governor

(Session ends March 12.)

Recommendation

Not applicable at this time.

Request for Commission Action

None at this time.”

○ **PNWA Columbia Snake River System 2020 Campaign**

The Port already committed funds to the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA) Columbia Snake River System (CSRS) 2020 Campaign. The Port will work with PNWA and provide updates on the campaign as it progresses. A flyer can be found in the above link and attached below.

○ **SBDC/WSU Cooperative Agreement –**

“SUBJECT: Cooperative agreement between Washington State University (WSU) and through its Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and the Port of Whitman County (Port).

Background

On December 19, 2019, the executive director distributed a proposed contract between WSU and the Port for the Commissioners to review. The contract is for the funding of a **certified SBDC Business Advisor** and related responsibilities. The Port attorney made recommendations to the attached draft.

Next Steps

1. Authorize execution of the agreement once it is finalized with the suggestions from the Port attorney. 2. Execute the agreement and continue to work with WSU for a successful launch and implementation in 2020.

Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of the cooperative agreement.

Request for Commission Action

Authorize execution of the agreement.” **(Approved)**

○ **CERB Committed Private Partner Application–Wilma Road Improvement Project**

Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB) – provides funding to Washington State communities for public infrastructure that helps private business growth and expansion.

“SUBJECT: CERB Committed Private Partner Application – Wilma Road Improvement Project

Background

On January 16th a presentation for the proposed Wilma **Road Improvement** Project was presented and the Port was awarded the grant loan combination for the project.

- Total Project Cost: \$1,600,297
- Committed Match: \$600,297 (Whitman County)
- CERB Funding Request:
\$750,000 loan \$250,000 grant (Port) “

○ **Petrichor Broadband LLC**

The Interlocal Agreement between the founding ports, Petrichor **Broadband** LLC, and the Port of Whitman County has been fully executed. The agreement names the Port of Whitman as the initial manager of the LLC.

○ **2018 CRISI Grant – WSDOT Matching Fund Agreement**

The Port Executive director signed the agreement with WSDOT for the \$15K Port match for the **PCC Rail System Rehabilitation Project**.

○ **Flight Line Drive Realignment Project Update**

Port of Whitman Business Air Center, Colfax - a map of this project can be found in the Port link above. **Approved staff recommended** “award of the Base Bid and Additive Alternate #2 and rejection of Additive Alternate #1. The rejected alternate can be reconsidered at a later date as the airport continues to develop.”

○ **Commission to Commission Meeting dates 2020**

- May meeting – Request to change date to either May 4 or May 18 (they chose May 18th)
- August Meeting – Proposed date of August 3
- November Meeting- Proposed date of November 2

New Business

- PNWA's *Taste the Northwest* Reception Sponsorship
Approved the \$500 sponsorship level + 4 cans of Cougar Gold Cheese
- Employment Agreement Addendum – (was approved)
- Resolution 20-04–Authorizing signatures with the Whitman County Treasurer’s Office
Approved to authorize Brenda Stav.

Public Meetings of interest to League:

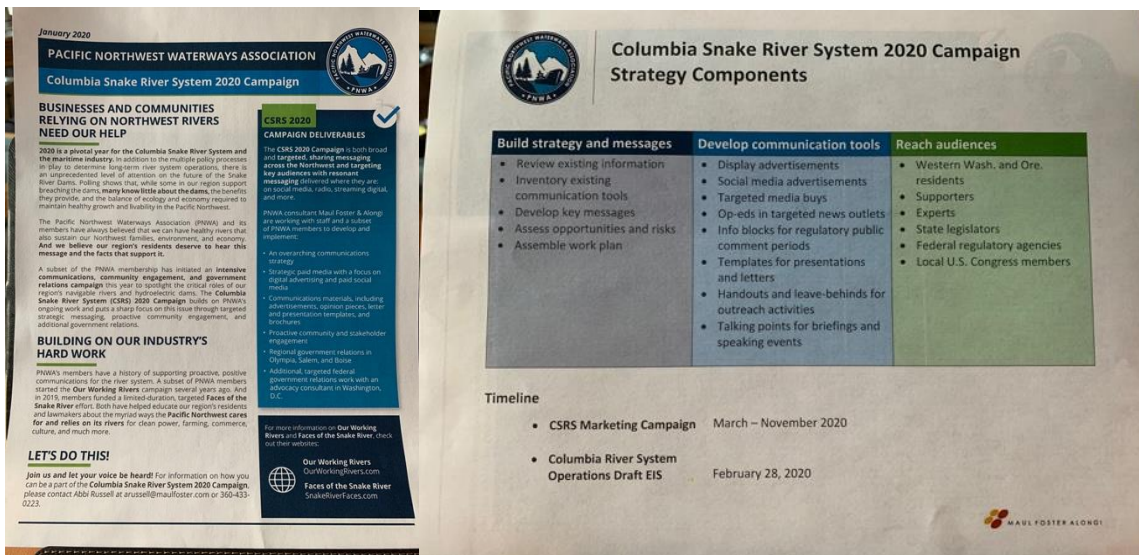
Inland Northwest Partners Spring Meeting, 2020 Regional Economic Forecast, Tues., Mar.24, 9a.m.-2:30 p.m., Center Place Event Center, Spokane Valley
Attendees: Brenda, Kara
Strategic Planning Meeting, Wed., Apr. 29, 10 a.m., Henley Court, Pullman

Process & Protocol:

Meeting started on time. All members were very prepared. The meeting was well conducted. They went through the agenda thoroughly and efficiently. They gave recognition where it was due. All materials were accessible to me and all those attending the meeting.

Additional comments/opinions:

1. WSU, the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and the Port of Whitman County (Port) cooperative agreement is a positive for the community.
2. Snake River Dams: Port supports the dams. Environmental advocates may see breaching the dams as a positive.



The following article from Wheat Life Magazine was passed around featuring Commissioner Tom Kammerzell

POLICY MATTERS

Growers urged to submit comments when EIS released

By Trista Crossley

We are less than two months into 2020, and it's already proven to be a busy year where the Columbia-Snake River System is concerned.

In January, Washington Gov. Jay Inslee's office finished accepting public comments on their draft report on the impacts of breaching the lower Snake River dams. And later this month, a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) on the operations, maintenance and configurations for 14 federal projects in the Columbia River System will be released.

In 2016, U.S. District Judge Michael Simon struck down the federal government's 2014 river system operating plan and ruled that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and Bonneville Power Administration must redo it and consider dam removal as a way to bolster salmon numbers. When the draft EIS is released, the public will be able to comment on it, something that is crucial for every farmer in the region who relies on the river system to move their product to market, said **Tom Kammerzell**, port commissioner for the Port of Whitman County and a Whitman County wheat farmer.



"Agriculture is, at present, a complex system. It's going to get more complicated in the future, more expensive, and shipping costs will go up if we lose navigation on the river system," he said. "So everybody has to take a look at their own operation and see if they can bear the burden of that cost. If the answer is, as I suspect, no, then they need to take the opportunity to help influence present change. This is an opportunity for proactive action, and that doesn't come along all that often."

Kammerzell said the agencies responsible for the EIS have made it clear that how those comments are submitted will play a big part in how much weight they carry. He cautioned growers to avoid signing onto group form

letters and should instead submit personalized, individual comments. Form letters, no matter how many signatures they include, will only be counted once.

"If they (the agencies) get a form letter with 100 people signing the bottom, those people have wasted their time. That will be considered one letter. But if you write to the agencies and talk about how removing the dams is going to affect you, your letter will stand alone and will weigh as heavily as those 100," Kammerzell explained. "Farmers need to tell their story, every single person needs to tell their story."

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) is firmly opposed to breaching any of the dams along the Columbia-Snake River System. WAWG has partnered with other stakeholders to educate the public on why the dams are so important to growers and to the region's economy. One of those partners is the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA), an organization that advocates for the region's waterways; Kammerzell is treasurer for the PNWA.

A study, commissioned by the PNWA and released last month (see page 16), estimates that removing the four lower Snake River dams would cost the U.S. more than \$2.3 billion over the next 30 years and put more than 1,100 farms in the region at risk of bankruptcy due to higher transportation costs.

"(Removing the dams) will be a game changer for sustainability in the future for farming in this area because I expect in these pressured times, where we don't have much margin, that this would be the stake in the heart for many farms," Kammerzell said.

Another potential cost of removing the dams that is often overlooked is the millions of private dollars that have been invested in infrastructure along the river. Many of those businesses have been built specifically to use the transportation opportunities the river offers and can't easily be relocated.

"All that money, all that time and that private investment will have been for naught. Who will make that right?" Kammerzell asked. "Who's going to pay to move the Almota elevator? They have no other outlet. They are river focused. They will have no business (on the river) so will have to be relocated up on the rail line. Who is going to pay for that?" ▶