

League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: **Port of Whitman County Commission**

October 4, 2018

Observer Reporting: Bobbie Ryder

Length of mtg: 1.5 hrs

Members Present: Bruce Ensley, Tom Kammerzell, John Love, Kristine A.K. Meyer, Kara Riebold

Guests: Shelley Fox, Linda Fender, Bobbie Ryder (LWV Observer Corps)

Absent (Joe Poire)

What was being discussed:

Most of the meeting focused on telecommunications and the role of the Port in this activity. Two community members were present and voiced eagerness to have better internet in rural areas.

Commission Updates:

Southern Resident Killer Whale (Orca) Recovery Task Force Update: Kristine discussed two webinars she attended on the Southern Killer Whales, which seems to be about the Snake River Dams. She felt it was a balanced presentation. The draft report was published Monday. The final report is scheduled to be released the second week in November. It can be viewed on the website

https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/SRKWDraftReport_09-24-18.pdf

Old Business:

POWBA Shop: Bids closed Oct. 16th. Site work is separate from the bids for the building.

Telecommunications: The Ports proposal was accepted for a \$750K loan and \$750K grant. Kara talked about the other 7 CERB grants that the Port of Whitman received in the past. This track record has been positive and CERB expressed that they are pleased with what the Port has done.

Motion made and passed to 1) Initiate the offer of financial aid, and 2) Staff to begin communication with the communities for installation of hut facilities for fiber optics.

Kara presented a model for how to understand the ability to serve more people and businesses. The Garfield provider has been willing to work with the Port and this collaboration is helping the Port figure out how to provide telecommunication services in conjunction with a service provider. The provider at the Colfax airport has been a problem. More expensive and less service. The next projects will be Rosalia, Tekoa, Oakesdale, Palouse. The purpose is to provide infrastructure that attracts industry.

Port of Skagit Interlocal Agreement: The interlocal agreement was reviewed by the Commissioners. It included payment for services from Skagit Valley to Port of Whitman of \$27,500 for the first year with a sliding scale based on % of traffic/use for subsequent years. This is a 5 year commitment and not longer than 20 years. Kara explained a table that shows the growth potential.

Statewide Activity: Port of Whitman keeps getting requests to tour our fiber system. Staff is asking for guidance on how to manage these requests. The Port has become well-known, statewide as an example of how to develop a fiber system. Staff is asking for how the Commissioners would like them to be involved and how much to engage with other ports to talk about our success.

Tom expressed concern with the executive director working half-time on this. He does not want to be the Port of Whitman Fiber Company. He wants the Port to be focused on jobs and growth locally.

John Love expressed the opposite. He sees that what Joe and Kara are doing as an industry that Whitman County should be in.

Kristine thinks the Port is the means to commerce. She feels we have a role and responsibility to have these conversations state-wide with other Ports. The Port of Whitman is a leader in this technology and that we should be taking this opportunity.

Bruce explained that the other Ports may not know what the opportunities might be if they invest in fiber optics and they are asking for leadership. He recommended that they have more discussion during Strategic Planning. John and Kristine noted that the Port has a structural deficit and that we need to do things (e.g., consulting) that brings in outside dollars. Joe and Kara will put together a proposal to discuss at the Strategic Planning retreat in Nov.

Pasco Riverfest 2018: The theme was “Our Rivers, Our Way of Life.” Staff reported that 3000 people attended this event held September 8th in Kennewick, WA. The Port of Whitman had a booth with a big “wheat box” instead of a sandbox for the kids. It was very popular.

Reminders

- PNWA Annual Convention, October 10-12, 2018, Hilton Vancouver, WA
- WPPA Small Ports Seminar, October 18-19, 2018, Leavenworth, WA
- Port/County Commission Meeting, November 5, 2018, Port of Whitman Office, 3:00 p.m.
- Strategic Planning Meeting, November 6-7, 2018, Spokane Club, Spokane, WA, 9:30 a.m.

Meeting adjourned for Executive Session at 11:30 am