

League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Port of Whitman County

Date: 1/21/21

Observer Reporting: Carolyn Joswig-Jones

Length of Meeting: 41”

Members Present:

Commissioners: Karl Webber (District 1)
Kristine Meyer (District 2)
Tom Kammerzell (District 3)

Staff:

Joe Poire - Executive Director
Kara Riebold - Chief Operating Officer
Debbie Snell - Properties & Development Manager
Brenda Stav - Finance Director
Sarah Highfield - Communications Director
~~Matthew Johnson - Port Attorney~~

Others Present (i.e., media, public): Seth Wilson from Chmelik, Sitkin & Davis Attorneys at Law

WPPA (Washington Public Port Association)
POWBAC (Port of Whitman Business Air Center – airport in Colfax)
PIP (Pullman Industrial Parks East and West)
PNWA (Pacific Northwest Waterways Association)
NWRP (Northwest River Partners)
SWEDA (Southeast Washington Economic Development Association)
USACE (United State Army Corps of Engineers)
RCW (Revised Code of WA)

Business pertaining to League Positions or topics of interest: (See below for full report of meeting)

- **Port Strategic Planning Meeting** - Public is encouraged to attend. Jan. 25, 2021, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
- Port Commissioners Webber and Kammerzell now have a voting seat on the Palouse Knowledge Corridor (PKC) Board.
- Commissioner Meyer shared a link to an article, “House Democrats unveil \$26 billion transportation package,” for those interested: <https://housedemocrats.wa.gov/fey/2021/01/20/house-democrats-unveil-26-billion-transportation-package/>
- House Bill 1056 - Washington Public Ports Association is tracking this open public meeting bill, and supports the ability of port districts to use digital technology to continue to realize the benefits afforded through virtual meetings.
- Port Legislative Priorities – list and description attached below.
- Port will move forward with an application for a toxic cleanup planning grant in an approximate funding amount of \$200,000 for the Collage Ave Steam Plant property.

To view Meeting Agenda, Minutes and all supportive materials follow this link:
<https://portwhitman-web.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/meetings/agendas/2021-01-21/2021-01-21%20Agenda.pdf>

Port of Whitman County Commissioners Meeting took place via **Zoom and teleconference** as per Governor proclamation. Port staff, if in the office, were behind closed doors.

Public comment: none

Commissioner and Staff Updates: Commissioner Webber stated he and Commissioner Kammerzell have been approved to have voting seats on the Palouse Knowledge Corridor (PKC) board.

OLD BUSINESS:

IT Audit Update

The Office of the Washington State Auditor (SAO) provided the IT audit plan for testing on the Port's IT systems and will be conducting "interviews" with the Port's IT service provider, Aldridge. This will happen over the next couple of months. The final report will be published, and a public meeting will be held in 5/2021.

NEW BUSINESS:

Current Public Meeting Guidance – this was not discussed much but information was provided in agenda and supportive material.

COVID-19 The state Department of Health (**DOH**) releases, every Friday, the regions' performances to case rates and trends, hospital admissions and ICU occupancy. Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC, a private nonprofit organization serving local governments in WA State) published a helpful article stating how the new reopening plan affects local government. This **article, Washington State's New Re-Opening Plan; The Roadmap to Recovery** can be seen on the Port website in the agenda's supportive materials using the above link.

"In addition, **House Bill 1056** seeks to end and make permanent certain aspects of **virtual Open Public Meetings**, specifically citing the technological advances that have made virtual meetings possible during the pandemic. Washington Public Ports Association is tracking this bill, and supports the ability of port districts to use digital technology to continue to realize the benefits afforded through virtual meetings."

Port Legislative Priorities

These are the main topics, and a drafted document is attached below. The commission had no additional comments.

- BROADBAND
- COMMUNITY ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION BOARD (CERB)
- WASHINGTON MARITIME BLUE INITIATIVE
- TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF)
- TRANSPORTATION FUNDING
- PCC RAIL FUNDING
- AVIATION FUNDING – COMMUNITY AVIATION REVITALIZATION PROGRAM (CARB)
- SMALL WORKS ROSTER THRESHOLDS

Engineering Selection Process for Airfield Development Projects

Port is looking into consultants for airfield development projects and formed a selection board to oversee that the processes conform to regulations.

Resolution 21-04 Integrated Planning Grant (IPG)

It was approved that the Port is to complete the application in the approximate funding amount of \$200,000 for a **toxic cleanup grant**, the Department of Ecology Integrated Planning Grant (IPG), which is due the last week of January 2021. The Port and WSU have entered into an Access Agreement **for the College Avenue Steam plant** so that the Port can perform an assessment of the Property.

Employee Manual Update- WA Paid Family Medical Leave Supplemental Benefit

Commission unanimously approved to allow Port employees to use accrued vacation leave, sick leave, compensatory leave, and administrative leave to supplement the benefit paid by Washington Paid Family and Medical Leave.

PNWA Mission in WA

Port will continue to pay membership/sponsorship fee to Pacific Northwest Waterways Association.

POWBAC Public Safety Comm Kammerzell spoke of a dilapidated building and rundown vehicles on public property next to POWBAC property as a public hazard and an eye sore. A public complaint to the county has been filed by the Port. Updates for actions will be added to next meeting agenda.

Upcoming Meetings

*****Port's Strategic Planning Meeting** - The Port will hold a strategic planning Commission meeting. The public is encouraged to attend. January 25, 2021, 10:00 a.m. — 2:00 p.m.

Washington Public Ports Association 2021 Port Day, February 2, via Zoom

Spokane Ag Show (Pacific Northwest Farm Forum), February 23-25 (revised date) via Zoom

Pacific Northwest Waterways Association Inland Empire Regional Meeting, March 2 via Zoom

Pacific Northwest Waterways Association Mission to Washington, March 15-18 via Zoom

Executive Session

10 minute non-public personnel performance review.

DRAFT - Port of Whitman County 2021 Legislative Priorities

BROADBAND – The Port of Whitman County supports expanded broadband authority for public organizations. We also request that public port authorities have a seat on the Public Works Trust Fund (PWTF) board. Our expertise in bringing broadband infrastructure to rural communities can be of great benefit to PWTF as the funding for telecommunications projects transfers from the Community Economic Revitalization Board to PWTF.

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION BOARD (CERB) – From the construction of Henley Court in Pullman Industrial Park to the Port's fiber-to-the-home project, several of the Port's large-scale developments were made possible by the continued partnership of CERB. The board has been an excellent partner to our community and our Port District. Therefore, we support CERB's legislative request of \$25 million for its core program, \$15 million for rural broadband funding, and codification of broadband authority under RCW 43.160.

WASHINGTON MARITIME BLUE INITIATIVE – The Port is a supporting member of the Washington Maritime Blue Initiative. Maritime Blue is a strategy to ensure Washington State is home to the most sustainable maritime industry in the world by 2050. This program is attractive to industries operating on the Columbia-Snake River System, and the ecological potential is exciting. We request that this fund is made sustainable and continues to build in the future.

TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF) – Along with the Washington Public Ports Association, we support the ability for cities, counties and ports to engage in tax increment financing projects for their local communities. Washington is one of the only states without such a tool currently.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING – The Port District ultimately benefits from the preservation and maintenance of adequate rail, road and air transportation. Therefore, we support the Washington Public Ports Association's goal of passing a transportation package that balances the need for increased revenue, including through the use of a carbon pricing tool, with increasing spending on maintenance, preservation, multimodal investments, and replacing aging infrastructure.

PCC RAIL FUNDING –The Port supports funding of the Palouse River and Coulee City (PCC) Rail System. (Additional details will be added, pending a response from WSDOT PCC Railway Manager, Bob Westby.)

AVIATION FUNDING – COMMUNITY AVIATION REVITALIZATION PROGRAM (CARB) – This program was established in 2019 to fund revenue-producing capital projects that assist public-use, general aviation airports to become more self-sustainable. As the manager of a general aviation airport, the Port of Whitman Business Air Center, the Port advocates for this program become permanent and receive an additional \$5 million allocation during the 2021-2023 budget cycle.

SMALL WORKS ROSTER THRESHOLDS – Ports were omitted from legislation which increased thresholds for the Small Works Roster procurement tool. A study looking at bid thresholds has recommended ports be allowed to expand their authority, but recent attempts have been unsuccessful.