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Request for Proposals Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements Review and Update

The Port of Columbia is seeking proposals from qualified firms to assist the 3-member Port Commission in the process of updating the Port of Columbia Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements, commonly known as the Comprehensive Plan in accordance with RCW 53.20.

Proposal received will be evaluated based on the criteria provided below and subsequent discussions with staff and commissioners in order to find the best candidate to assist our small port district with this important process. [View current Comp Plan and other planning documents here.](#)

Background:

The Port of Columbia has updated its Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements (Comp Plan) several times as required in RCW 53.20 over the last 15 years. A fairly comprehensive update was completed in 2019, although public interest was minimal at the time. As a very small Port in the second-smallest county in the state, these updates have always been conducted in-house by Port staff and the Comp Plan remains a relatively simple, readable document.

Since October of 2021, the Port Commission has experienced 100% turnover with 3 brand-new commissioners. One was appointed in October 2021 due to the death of a commissioner, and the other two were elected in November of 2021. There were two seats listed on the ballot in the same year due to resignations the previous year.

This turnover has precipitated the need for a review and update to the Comp Plan in order to clarify the goals of the new commission and align the Port's work with those goals. The executive director has recommended that the commission seek guidance from experts to assist with the process, and the commission has authorized this Request for Proposals.

Brief Port History:

The Port of Columbia, located in the southeast corner of Washington State near Walla Walla, was formed in 1958 along with several other port districts located along the Snake River. The Port was instrumental in helping the private sector grain co-ops develop barge shipping opportunities as the dams were constructed, yet focused its own resources on the development of a recreation facility called Lyons Ferry Marina. The Port continues to operate and maintain the marina facility in coordination with a private sector concessionaire.

The Port of Columbia's mission is to maximize public resources and private investment to create jobs, provide infrastructure, and maintain and improve the economic vitality of Columbia County and its communities.

By the 1980s, the mechanization of agriculture, consolidation of agribusinesses, and reduction in local food processing workforce had caused a dramatic decline in population and shuttered many businesses. The community sought to diversify its economy and asked the Port District for help. The Port of Columbia purchased property in the City of Dayton and began developing the Rock Hill Industrial Park, now home to 9 buildings and 14 business tenants.

In 1996, a severe flood damaged a portion of the Blue Mountain Railroad, owned by the Union Pacific and already in a state decline due to lack of revenue from shipping. Rather than fix the line, UP donated it to the Port of Columbia, who made the necessary repairs and continues to own this 37-mile shortline railroad from Dayton to Walla Walla. The biggest shipper, Seneca food, stopped canning asparagus in Dayton in 2004. The rail line is leased to a private operator.

In 2007, the Port commissioned a marketing study to find a niche to focus on for new business development. The result is the Blue Mountain Station Food Processing Park, now home to 2 buildings, 8 business tenants and a commercial kitchen.

The Port also serves as the Associate Development Organization (ADO) for Columbia County.

Goals of the Update:

- To inform and educate Port Commissioners, customers, stakeholders, community partners, taxpayers, and the general public about the assets of the Port and their potential uses;
- To determine goals and objectives regarding the sale of Port assets;
- To determine the viability of undertaking new development areas not typical to ports, e.g. housing, downtown commercial development, etc.
- To identify opportunities to meet the Port's mission, goals, and objectives in a concise, sustainable and environmentally suitable manner;
- To develop short-, medium-, and long-term plans and implementation strategies to meet the mission and goals of the Port for job creation, recreation, and investments in the region's infrastructure, community, and workforce development.

The finished product should be a document that clearly describes the state of the Port and guides asset management decisions, economic development programs, and implementation strategies over the next seven years.

Selection Criteria:

- Demonstrated ability to navigate differing viewpoints and find consensus
- Demonstrated ability to provide quality services that fit our small, eastern Washington Port District in a cost-effective manner (under \$50,000)
- Demonstrated experience with Port Comp Plan updates
- References

Please email Jennie Dickinson or call the port office at 509-382-2577 for questions and clarifications.

Proposals should be no more than 20 pages and will be received at the Port office via email to jennie@portofcolumbia.org no later than 3 pm Thursday, October 7, 2022.

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