

Port of Columbia
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes
February 9, 2022

Chairperson Crowe opened the meeting at 5:02pm

Present via Zoom: Commissioners Genie Crowe, Seth Bryan and Johnny Watts, Executive Director Jennie Dickinson, Port Office Manager Melody Shahan, special guests speaking on behalf of childcare for Columbia County Shane McGuire, Paul Ihle, Anne-Marie Schwerin, Malea Saul, Karla Castillo, Matt Bona, John McLean, Eiledon McClellan and Tabitha Haney, community members Michael Haight, Jorie Aukerman, Kris Takemura, Tiffany Struthers, Betty Longen, Jesse Yost, Belinda Larsen, Melissa Bryan, Julia Leavitt, Marcene Hendrickson, Scott Hudson, Elisabeth Naylor, City of Dayton, Kari Dingman, Jason Norris, Heidi James, Karen Paolino, Brendan Vance, Michelle Jenkins, Paul Didelius, Paula Murdock, Joy Smith, Susan and members of the press Waitsburg Times, Michele Smith, and Dayton Chronicle.

Commissioner Crowe asked for any public comments: Jorie Aukerman explained she was attending the meeting because of her concern for the lack of childcare in our area and supports a resolution.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes from the January meeting were reviewed.

MOTION: Commissioner Watts moved to approve the minutes and Commissioner Bryan seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Review Monthly Budget Report & Approval of Vouchers: The budget report was discussed in detail. On the income side of the budget, cash balance numbers are incorrect. Jennie will have the bookkeeper correct it. Commissioner Watts questioned why the election expenses charged by the County at \$15,000 were so much higher than six years ago when it was less than \$300. Dickinson will inquire and report her findings at the next meeting.

Leases: Leases were approved for Gracie Pearson of Three Pines Bookkeeping for a month-to-month lease for suite B in the Cameron Co-working building and Tiffany Struthers of Rural Route Farms for the Blue Mountain Station commercial garden.

Review & Adopt Policies for 2022: Commissioner Bryan suggested using a simpler rule of order, such as Democratic Rules of Order instead of Robert's Rules in meetings. Commissioner Crowe requested the change possibly made later in the year after researching the topic. Commissioner Watts, in reference to Policy #4 Cellular Phone Policy, requested Commissioners adopt the same employee phone policy or have a Port issued phone. He further posed a change to the policy wording regarding Port issued phones to read that decisions made by the Executive Director will be in regards to employees and the Commissioners will discuss and decide among themselves how to proceed with Commissioner phones. Commissioner Crowe specified it was a question of cost effectiveness and inquired how many Port related calls were received over a month. Commissioner Bryan stated six times, Commissioner Watts stated seven or eight times.

MOTION: Commissioner Watts moved to approve the policies with noted changes for #4 Cellular Phone Policy and Commissioner Bryan seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Set Date for Next Workshop: Next workshop will be on February 17th at 5:00 pm with Paul Didelius and an employee. The workshop will be held in person and via Zoom.

Meeting Format: Commissioners Bryan and Watts agreed to move the format to hybrid meetings. Commissioner Crowe asks about the room capacity. Dickinson responded 21 and suggested a change to the room layout to make it work.

MOTION: Commissioner Bryan moved to proceed to a hybrid format for future meetings and workshops and Commissioner Watts seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

WPPA: The WPPA is offering Commissioner meetings in Skamania May 4-6th, Walla Walla July 25-27th and Leavenworth October 20-21st. The Leavenworth meeting is designed to be less expensive for smaller ports to attend. Dickinson will notify the Commissioners when registration begins for each meeting venue.

Rock Hill Industrial Park: Plumbing work at Dayton Tractor & Machine and maintenance work at Cameron Co-working was completed. Dustin Wolther with Touchet Valley Landscaping is moving to Texas and has planned to sell his business to a local person. A Request for Proposal for Contract Services (RFP) for landscaping services was sent to the local newspapers. Dickinson will give an update on the results of the RFP at the next meeting.

Lyons Ferry Marina: A payment was made to the Department of Health for the Large Onsite Sewage System. Annual Maintenance Permit for the US Army Corps of Engineers is being compiled. The drawings from Anderson Perry for the new pull thru sites are coming soon. The marina store will be opening soon with new hours as they prepare for spring.

Blue Mountain Station: Things are going well.

CWW Railroad: Commissioner Bryan suggested a grant opportunity for the railroad but Dickinson's research showed it only applied to inner city rail. The rail operator has two funding sources they are watching. A snow plow in Waitsburg damaged one of the crossings, but the rail operator will repair the damage as no one has claimed responsibility. A new house is going in near the railroad and the owner dug a trench on the right of way. Dickinson is addressing the situation.

Presentation on Childcare Facility: Presenters: Eiledon McClellan, Director at Walla Walla Valley Early Learning Coalition; Tabitha Haney, Director at My Friend's House; Anne-Marie Schwerin, Executive Director at the YWCA; Karla Castillo Office Manager at the YWCA; Shane McGuire and Paul Ihle with Columbia County Health System (CCHS); Matt Bona with ESD 123; John McClean Principal Architect at Blue Room Architecture & Design and Malea Saul the Data Analyst & Visualization Lead at Arrowleaf Consulting.

The stakeholder committee has been researching sites for about a year and chose Blue Mountain Station as the best option for a childcare facility. Eiledon presented information regarding the lack of childcare and how it has a negative impact for people who work and live in Dayton. The basic need for childcare in our county is 70 slots and right now we have zero. A lack of childcare effects the entire community, parents have to drive their children to Walla Walla, quit their job or move. 47% parents had to limit their work hours, 47% had to take time off work and 25% had to quit their job. 82% of parents state that childcare responsibilities limit their job performance or career goals. Employers also face issues including attracting employees, absenteeism, decreased productivity & profit and higher turnover.

Paul stated that in the health system childcare issues have become a high priority. CCHS would construct and own the building and the YWCA would run the daily operations of the facility. Ann Marie shared that the YWCA does want to provide care in partnership with parents. She gave a brief history of childcare and the YWCA. Tabitha stated that the facility would offer a full educational program for kids in Dayton.

Shane spoke about looking for a suitable building or area that would work as a childcare facility including the migrant school and a local church. The church building is not structurally viable and would cost \$2 million to

restructure only the basement. The Dayton City park was considered but it is located in the flood plain and federal funding may not be appropriate. The proposed property at Blue Mountain Station has all the necessary utilities space. The funding for Phase 1 to start the program is estimated at \$1.7 million for a building to accommodate 40 kids. Phase 2 would offer 2-3 more classrooms with a budget of \$1 million and accommodate up to 70 children. John discussed the design for the facility and that it would be comparable in size to the Blue Mountain Station building at 6,900 square foot. Location of childcare facility would be located southwest of the garden.

Michelle Jenkins, a nurse at CCHS spoke about having two children and the limited time she has with them. She has difficulty working her full hours because of the use of in-home, unreliable, unlicensed childcare that offers only limited hours. Brendan Vance with Columbia Straw shared that potential employees have declined employment due to a lack of childcare in the area. Dickinson added that business recruitment is tough in our area due to lack of housing and childcare. Heidi James with Columbia Straw shared that employees that commute from Dayton and Waitsburg don't have a choice but to work limited hours. A childcare facility that offered extended hours would be greatly helpful. Shane replied to Heidi stating that the facility is proposed to be a 12-hour facility with extended hours as a goal.

Commissioner Crowe offered her support for the facility.

Commissioner Bryan expressed that government should not be responsible for childcare but he agreed the lack of childcare in our area is an issue. He questioned the rent to be paid and said the facility would operate at a loss. His concern was also about prioritizing who is able to use the facility and that hospital employees would use all available slots. He does not see it as fitting with the representation of Blue Mountain Station, nor it does it fit the Port's mission and suggested a private business to offer childcare instead. Shane responded that the facility may need government assistance because of the level of poverty in our area. He also clarified that hospital employees would not be the priority for the childcare center. Paul stated it would be for the community and to offer childcare for all. Ann Marie explained that the YWCA would operate the facility and that her organization is a non-profit, not a government agency and further explained that they would not be operating at a loss.

Commissioner Watts had questions and would like to further discuss it before a decision is made. Dickinson explained it would be a bare land lease and the Port would be providing the land, not operating the facility. Marcene asked why the migrant school was not considered. Shane responded that the condition of the building that had been vacant for several years was not worth the cost of a remodel at \$400,000 for a kitchen and one of the four classrooms.

Commissioner Watts inquired what legislative action had caused this issue and if anyone in government could help the process. Tabitha responded that work is being done to mainstream things and make it easier for programs to get up and running at the state level. Ann Marie suggested that talking to legislators and challenging them to work for families to receive subsidies that are closer to the cost of care for those under the poverty rate. Eiledon explained that childcare providers are paid very little for what they do and to stay open a childcare business must also do extra work behind the scenes, such as their own bookkeeping. Heidi shared about the high cost of private daycare and the negative impact it has on her. Her preference is public daycare for cost and hours of operation.

Commissioner Bryan said he is not convinced that a childcare facility will work with the resources available at Blue Mountain Station and it would be better in another place that is not located on a high-speed highway, where the speed limit may need adjusted. He does not see the cost is a good use of Port resources. Tiffany suggested a perspective that the facility could attract more frequent foot traffic and possible future businesses at Blue Mountain Station.

Commissioner Crowe responded to Commissioner Watts that legislators should be asked why there are so many issues and that he should note the information given in the chat to reach out and ask questions. Kris Takemura said that the mission of the Port is for economic development, growth and to provide infrastructure and she further agreed that a childcare facility is providing these important aspects to the community. Dickinson directed the discussion to the guest speakers who need to know if property at Blue Mountain Station is a possibility. She continued that it is a very viable use of Port property for economic development with many businesses being affected. Shane confirmed that some of the grants the committee need to apply for are under time constraints and a viable location is needed. Commissioner Crowe asked for a motion to continue considering a suitable site for the daycare center at Blue Mountain Station. Commissioner Watts would like to discuss further at a workshop. No second was made. All presenters and speakers were thanked for attending the meeting.

Executive Director's Report: No questions

Broadband: The contract with Zero dB has been signed. An upcoming walkout meeting with Zero dB and Petrchor representatives will be held Friday, February 11th.

Touchet Valley Trail: A bike trail workshop will need to be scheduled to discuss a grant opportunity available in May. Bike trail design will be finished in July.

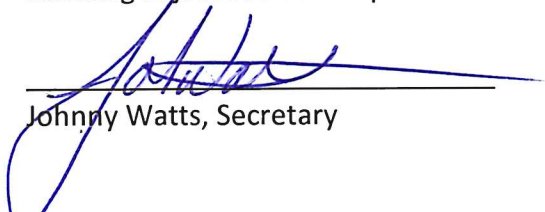
Housing: A presentation with Common Roots was rescheduled for March.

Anyone with questions or comments are instructed to reach out to the Port commissioners.

Approval of Vouchers: Commissioners approved regular monthly vouchers in the amount of: \$130,630.06.

11506-11515	Payroll	15,305.06	11538	Department of Health	872.06
11516	Jennifer S Dickinson{O}	264.59	11539	Dingle's of Dayton	54.51
11517	A-1 Plumbing	345.80	11540	Double T Construction	3,089.40
11518	Anderson Perry, Inc.	6,752.93	11541	Elk Drug	4.31
11519	Armored Knights Locksmith	352.16	11542	Gillespie Roofing Inc.	35,949.65
11520	Banner Bank - 1585	3,205.27	11543	Inland Northwest Partners	50.00
11521	Banner Bank - 1593	1,475.05	11544	Jamestown Networks	377.24
11522	Banner Bank - GO Bond - 3946	2,380.98	11545	LEAF	201.73
11523	Banner Bank IB#2 - 1189	4,216.67	11546	MBG Cleaning Services	1,480.00
11524	Banner Bank BMS #2 Bond - 9342	2,440.84	11547	Mill Creek Mechanical	677.51
11525	Basin Disposal Inc	37.90	11548	Pacific Power	1,937.85
11526	Basin Disposal of Walla Walla	118.14	11549	Plus Delta After School Studios	5,000.00
11527	Blue Room Architecture & Design P.S.	3,480.00	11550	Roto Rooter	697.01
11528	Brewer's Bookkeeping & Payroll Services	1,200.00	11551	Senske	133.04
11529	Cardmember Service	446.93	11552	Total Comfort Solutions, LLC	1,190.20
11530	City Lumber	1,141.64	11553	Total Office Concepts	18.92
11531	City of Dayton	1,743.86	11554	US Linen & Uniform	104.28
11532	Col. Co. Auditor	7,500.63	11555	Washington Public Ports Association	1,028.00
11533	Columbia County Health Department	235.00	11556	Wilson Technology Solutions	81.67
11534	Columbia iConnect	136.39	11557	Touchet Valley Landscapes	742.65
11535	Crown Paper & Janitorial Supply, Inc	156.27	11558	Anderson Perry, Inc.	23,563.42
11536	Dayton Chamber of Commerce	300.00	11559	City of Dayton	131.27
11537	Dayton Mercantile	9.23			

Meeting adjourned at 6:57pm. Next meeting March 9, 2022 at 5:00pm.



Johnny Watts, Secretary