

Port of Columbia
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes
February 14, 2024

Chair Bryan opened the meeting at 5:00pm. Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Present: Commissioners Bryan, Watts and Spring, Port Staff Jennie Dickinson, Jill Essency & Tracy Clark, and 4 members of the public. 9 members of the public attended via Zoom. **Absent:** None.

Public Comment: No comments were made.

Approval of Minutes: Commissioner Spring moved to approve the minutes from the January 10th regular meeting, seconded by Bryan. Motion approved.

Finances: Monthly Budget Report & Approve Vouchers – Dickinson went over the finalized the 2023 budget report. There was no further budget discussion, and the vouchers were approved.

Leases: There were no leases to be discussed. The Port was approached by an individual interested in leasing Suite D at the co-working building. More information will be provided at the next meeting.

Policy Follow-up: The updated Small and Attractive Assets forms were presented with the changes that the commissioners suggested. Spring suggested deleting items that are not easily removeable such as the walk-in cooler at BMS. Watts would like to add a column showing the condition of the item and whether the item should be surplus.

Rock Hill Industrial Park: The GSA inspection showed no deficiencies, which is a first. The GSA lease is up for renewal at the end of this year. The weed control maintenance agreement will be renewed next month. There were no building problems during the cold snap. Pacific Power is offering an incentive for changing the lighting in businesses to LED. The Port is looking into this for Port properties and for other community businesses.

Lyons Ferry Marina: Dickinson and concessionaire have been meeting with the Resource Conservation Office (RCO) and we can't apply for funding on anything that is in the water until we have a permitting plan with the Corps of Engineers. We can apply for funding for the pull-thru RV sites and planning funds for things such as mooring docks, crib wall, etc. to start the permitting process. The concessionaires are willing to put in cash match. In-kind match is also available, for people wanting to help with labor and machinery. Resolution will need to be presented in March for May application. Spring and Watts are wanting to move forward. The county is working to update the parks plan.

Blue Mountain Station: The commissioners were sent the finalized Grain Cluster Study. It looks like the best option would be for the Port to build and own the building and lease it to Mainstem Malt. They have already purchased equipment. Need to survey the regional growers to see if they would have need for the grain cluster portion of the project. CERB has a grant available for this type of project. It would be a \$5 million loan, \$1.25 million of which would be a grant, and a \$3.75 million, 2.0% interest loan with a 3-year deferral. A contingency agreement would need to be signed by Main Stem Malt. The size of the building is still in question. Dickinson would like to invite MSM to come to the next meeting. A resolution would need to be signed allowing the Port to apply for the CERB funds. A glass recycler is interested in using the BMS parking area once a month, April to October, to collect glass for recycling. There would be a charge for people to use this service. Dickinson suggested the Port pay this fee so as not to burden the public. It would be \$450 a month. It could be lower depending on how much glass was collected. Spring would like to try it for a couple months to introduce the public to it at our cost. Public comment was made that you can use the bin at the transfer station for free. There were questions on whether that was recycled or just garbage. Watts wants to see how the public uses it with self-pay and Bryan agreed. Watts would like clarification on whether or not the transfer station glass is recycled.

CWW Railroad: The Val maps are being reviewed by the appraiser. Dickinson is working with the rail operator, the city and the attorney on the master license agreement for the sewer line project. Spring would like more information on why we are not allowed to use the rail accessing Wallula.

Dayton Community Broadband: Phase 1 – Dickinson reported a couple of premises were missed, we're working on adding them into the project. The second order of drops has arrived. **Touchet Valley Broadband:** Phase 2 – A change order has been made to add 5 premises that were missed in the original design, two premises that were built recently, a longer drop to one premise and the addition of the Rose Gulch Bridge. Due to weather the ground restoration is on hold. The substantial completion date has been moved to March 31st with final wrap up moved to May 30th. **Rural Broadband Planning:** Petrichor has received funds to help with BEAD funding. CERB also has funds. Watts would like to survey the public on their satisfaction with the fiber project so far. Charter is still building here.

Community and Economic Development

Staff Reports: Dickinson sent the commissioners an invitation to attend the MARAD workshop in May. Dickinson is facilitating a section on federal funding. The Walla Walla Regional Tourism study is complete. Working with stakeholders throughout the Walla Walla Valley on what the next steps should be. Dickinson is testifying to the legislature on codifying the CERB broadband funding, making it part of their regular program. Highway 12 through Dayton will not see any funding for repair until 2027. The Legislature is focusing on new roads and freeways and not on preservation and maintenance. Essency has been planning and hosting workshops on social media and business finance. Next workshops will be how to use Chat GPT and AI. Quarterly Connections is our new networking event. The first one will be held on March 7th at R&B BBQ. Choose Columbia County analytics show a 577 increase in Impressions and a 430 increase in reach and a 40 increase in accounts engaged. Starting to reach the Tri-cities area. Working with local partners on digital equity in the community.

Housing: Dickinson has been meeting with the city planner about annexing just the commercial properties near BMS. Dickinson is starting a conversation with a consultant on housing. Dickinson will have more to report on at future meetings.

Executive Session: An executive session as per RCW 42.30.10 was held (c) To consider the minimum price at which real estate will be offered for sale or lease when public knowledge regarding such consideration would cause a likelihood of decreased price. However, final action selling or leasing public property shall be taken in a meeting open to the public. (g) To evaluate the qualifications of an applicant for public employment or to review the performance of a public employee. The executive session began at 6:13pm and was expected to last no more than 20 minutes, it ended at 6:33pm.

Commissioner Bryan made a motion to change the Executive Director position from a contracted position to a non-contracted, at will position. Watts seconded. Spring opposed. Motion passed 2 to 1.

Bryan went on to explain, in his opinion, that it isn't necessary to have the Executive Director position as a contracted position, that it puts the Port in a difficult situation, and he doesn't see the benefit. It leaves very little repercussion unless there are very severe actions or very poor behavior. He has seen insubordination and Dickinson trying to drive a wedge in the commission and create dissention or hardship. Spring tried to stop Bryan's comments, saying that he seemed to be conducting a personnel evaluation in public. Bryan said he is the chairperson, and he has the right to bring up things that happen in public meetings, based on his opinion. And because of these reasons he is not willing to enter into a contract at this time. Spring felt that it was a personal attack. Spring feels that the professional way to run a business is to have a contract so that people know where they stand in the process, and that the time to correct or reward behavior should come during her evaluation. Watts then asked for public comments. Tracy Clark made comment that what just happened was really unprofessional and that Bryan's feelings should not have been shared publicly but should have taken place in private with Dickinson or on her evaluation. It was rude and not the right way to treat employees.

Final Comments: Chair Bryan asked for final public comment. A person in attendance asked if any action was taken on the other item discussed in the executive session. Bryan stated no action was taken.

Approval of Vouchers: Commissioners approved regular monthly vouchers in the amount of: \$486,449.75.

02/01/2024	12732-12741	Payroll	24,708.14	02/14/2024	12762	Emerge Tech	70.00
02/14/2024	12742	Jennifer Dickinson (O)	112.97	02/14/2024	12763	Inland Cellular	146.30
02/14/2024	12743	Bank of Idaho	23.18	02/14/2024	12764	Inland Northwest Partners	150.00
02/14/2024	12744	Anderson Perry	39,010.89	02/14/2024	12765	Jamestown	198.23
02/14/2024	12745	Arrowleaf Consulting	10,500.00	02/14/2024	12766	LEAF	408.16
02/14/2024	12746	Banner Bank - 1585	3,205.27	02/14/2024	12767	MBG Cleaning	1,480.00
02/14/2024	12747	Banner Bank - 1593	1,475.05	02/14/2024	12768	Mill Creek Mechanical	1,272.35
02/14/2024	12748	Banner Bank - 3946	2,431.59	02/14/2024	12769	Pacific Power	3,107.64
02/14/2024	12749	Banner Bank - 9342	2,440.84	02/14/2024	12770	Performance Systems	667.71
02/14/2024	12750	Basin Disposal	70.23	02/14/2024	12771	Petrichor Broadband	1,866.00
02/14/2024	12751	Basin Disposal of Walla Walla	271.06	02/14/2024	12772	Plus Delta After School Studios	5,000.00
02/14/2024	12752	Blue Mtn. Tel	VOID	02/14/2024	12773	Senske	74.96
02/14/2024	12753	Card Member Services	2,374.43	02/14/2024	12774	Steven Peterson	8,000.00
02/14/2024	12754	City Lumber	57.40	02/14/2024	12775	Stratagy Northwest	1,000.00
02/14/2024	12755	City of Dayton	2,057.31	02/14/2024	12776	US Linen	119.02
02/14/2024	12756	Columbia County Auditor	6,072.26	02/14/2024	12777	Valley Wide Propane	466.23
02/14/2024	12757	Columbia County Health Dept	235.00	02/14/2024	12778	WA State Dept. of Trans.	5,486.14
02/14/2024	12758	Crown Paper	98.25	02/14/2024	12779	Waitsburg Times	135.00
02/14/2024	12759	Dayton Chamber of Commerce	300.00	02/14/2024	12780	Washington Public Port Assoc.	895.00
02/14/2024	12760	Dayton Mercantile	26.99	02/14/2024	12781	Zero db	12,261.42
02/14/2024	12761	Dingle's of Dayton	22.74	02/14/2024	12782	Blue Mtn. Tel	348,151.99

Chair Bryan adjourned the meeting at 6:39 pm.



 Mike Spring, Secretary