

**Port of Columbia**  
Special Meeting Minutes  
February 5, 2025

Chair Bryan opened the meeting at 5:00pm.

**Present:** Commissioners Bryan, Watts and Spring, Port Attorney Kim Boggs, Port Staff Jennie Dickinson, Jill Essency, Tracy Clark, Rail Operator Paul Didelius, Rail Stakeholders: Chris Shires (Seneca), David McKinley (Columbia County Crain Growers Assoc.), Chris Peha (Northwest Grain Growers), Ryan Paulson & Deb Hays (City of Dayton), and 18 members of the public. Rail Appraisers Keith Bruno and Gary Anglemyer attended via Zoom along with 19 members of the public. **Absent:** None.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Opening Statement:** Commissioner Bryan stated the purpose of the special meeting was to ask questions of the rail operator and to hear from stakeholders regarding the possible sale of the railroad. It is an information gathering meeting. A clear directive will be given to the Executive Director on what the Commissioners want and need moving forward. Public comment will not be taken at this meeting.

**Introduction of Stakeholders:** Dickinson introduced the stakeholders who were invited to attend. Ryan Paulson, Paul Didelius, Chris Shires, David McKinley, Chris Peha, Deb Hays, Keith Bruno and Gary Anglemyer.

**Ryan Paulson, City of Dayton:** Paulson stated it could be financially detrimental to the city and the wastewater / sewer project if the rail was sold to private ownership. The cost of doing any work to the already existing utilities, new sewer line and any future expansion within the rail right-of-way would be too costly. Dayton's survival is dependent on upgrading the wastewater facility.

**Paul Didelius, Columbia County Rail owner:** Didelius gave an overview on his rail ownership and operation in the state.

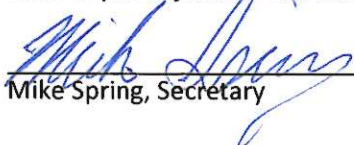
**David McKinley, Columbia County Association of Wheat Growers:** McKinley said he always thought of this local railroad was like an insurance policy for the farmers in case the dams were breached or there was a catastrophic mechanical failure. The Port / county should maintain ownership. If the rail is sold, control would be lost. The Port has an opportunity to improve the condition of the rail with grant monies.

**Chris Peha, Northwest Grain Growers:** Peha was concerned and surprised that Didelius did not inform them that he was interested in purchasing the rail from the Port and that he had to hear that from Dickinson. He thought the rail operator should have included stakeholders in the conversation. Public partners are better, or at the very least public/private partners are favorable for grant opportunities such as Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grants. Peha also has concerns that the sale would have a long-term impact for generations to come. Also, he sees the need to be forward thinking and to take into consideration the potential value of the rail corridor. He stated you could never replace it.

**Questions were made throughout the meeting by Commissioners Byran, Watts, Spring, and by Boggs and Dickinson to the stakeholders and rail operator.**

**Commission Watts shared a list of questions he would like answers to. He would like a one or two page document with information that can be shared with the public. Directive was given to Dickinson and Boggs to compile a list to present to the commissioners for approval. Once the list is approved by the commission, research will be conducted.**

Chair Bryan adjourned the meeting at 6:25 pm.

  
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Mike Spring, Secretary