

Port of Columbia
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes
August 13, 2025

Chair Bryan opened the meeting at 5:00pm.

Present: Commissioners Bryan and Spring, Port Attorney Kim Boggs, Port Staff Jennie Dickinson, Shane Laib, and Tracy Clark, along with 22 members of the public. Commissioner Watts and 16 members of the public attended via Zoom. **Absent:** None.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment: Marty Hall stated it would be a disservice to the community to sell the rail line and has concerns about the price offered. He also feels it is crucial to keep the rail and the corridor if the dams are ever removed. Jacob Forsmann echoed Marty's comments. It is necessary to keep the corridor for utilities that are and could be placed there. It would be a mistake to sell. Charles Belamy would like to have maintenance done on the rail for heavier rail cars. Fred Crowe stated that the price offered is far less than appraised. With that said the owner could turn around and sell it for a profit. Laura Aukerman stated she is not completely up to date with the discussions about the rail but has concerns that the Port can't afford to maintain it and grant funding may not be the answer. The rail is expensive to maintain and repair. Skip Mead stated he is not in favor of selling. He would like a Pro's and Con's list. Commissioner Spring told him that was what the Rail Report was for, answering a list of questions the commissioner had. Skip then requested a stakeholder town hall meeting. He also thought conditions of maintenance to the rail and corridor should be included in the lease. Chuck Ketterman stated that a public hearing should be held first before decisions were made. Jacob Forsmann added that the state owns rail lines that are in similar condition as our rail.

Approval of Minutes: Watts moved to approve the minutes of the July 8th meeting, seconded by Spring. Motion approved.

Finances: Monthly Budget Report & Approve Vouchers – Dickinson explained some of the larger and more unusual invoices. The vouchers were approved. The budget report was presented to the commission. There were no comments or questions.

Leases: None.

Consider Change of Date for September Meeting: Commissioner Spring has a personal conflict on next month's scheduled meeting date. He doesn't want to miss it and requested it be moved to Tuesday, September 9th. The commissioners agreed to move the September 10th meeting to Tuesday, September 9, 2025.

Rock Hill Industrial Park: Dickinson reported there has been low maintenance this month and there are no changes to tenants. Suite "E" at the co-working building is being advertised as available.

Lyons Ferry Marina: Dickinson reported that the moorages at Columbia Park will not be purchased. The check written last month was voided. The company hired to remove them found that they were disintegrating and could not be used. The maintenance crew at Lyons Ferry Marina have found that "C" moorage can be repaired for around \$5,000, which the concessionaire will pay for. This is only a temporary fix, "C" moorage still needs to be replaced. Dickinson reported that we can ask RCO for funding to repair walkways, boat launch and "transient" moorage, which is what "C" moorage is used for currently. We will need to work out the match portion of the grant. Walker Fab Lab, here in Dayton, feels they can repair the damage caused by Tidewater. Again, the concessionaire will pay for this repair. Dickinson and Laib attended Wally Knouf's memorial at the river this week. Dickinson was happy to report we were successful in our application to fund the RV pull-thru sites, garnering \$1.3m. Dickinson had her first pre-grant meeting with RCO today, working on the timeline. The project will be completed in 2027 and will consist of 10 pull-thru sites and an upland restroom.

Blue Mountain Station: Dickinson shared that the latest recycling event yielded 1,100 pounds of glass from a winery and 750 pounds from the general public. 50% of the design drawings are complete on the malt facility. The next step in the design process is equipment placement.

CWW Railroad: Discussion took place amongst the commissioners on selling the rail line.

Commissioner Spring was wishing for a substantial offer. There is need to retain it for future use. The buyer is holding us hostage and extorting us in pushing us to sell the line to him. Spring would like to look at other bidders/operators. It would be a shame to have two operators on this short line. He would like to have a commissioner's workshop to discuss this issue further.

Commissioner Watts has the same concerns as the public. He likes to support private businesses, but research was needed to make an informed decision. Watts thinks the decimal point is in the wrong place and that the risk is greater than the reward. There is the need to consider the generations to come. He wants the rail to remain operational and do what is best for Dayton. He doesn't think a sale is on the table with the numbers given. There is risk in not selling as well, maintenance issues if the operator pulls out. Whoever is going to manage it, there will need to be contingencies in place that it remains a viable source for operation. We shouldn't be looking to profit on the railroad. Watts likes current operator and what they are doing. Better to keep the costs low for an operator and not let it sit. Again, Watts stated it seems like a huge risk rather than a reward to sell.

Commissioner Spring thinks that October would be the best time to hold community workshop, after harvest.

Commissioner Bryan said holding an October meeting is not a good timeline, too much of a delay. It has been almost 4 years of discussion. There is a need to act. If needed, we can hold an extra meeting. The meeting could be held in the next two weeks. There will be no public comment at that meeting, it will be a commissioner workshop. Bryan agrees that the dollar amount is low. He doesn't perceive the rail operator's comments as extortion or a threat; it is just a business decision. If there is a complaint to be filed with the surface transportation board, it would come from the shippers. We will be between a rock and hard spot if it is not sold. It will be hard to find an operator who will want to pass off rail cars in Walla Walla. Bryan mentioned there is opportunity that other people would be interested in a competitive bid or sealed bid process and that the offer would be higher. We should set a minimum price if that occurs. Bryan wants to get the workshop completed and listen to public comment. The lease expires in December. That is the deadline to make a decision or look for someone else. We don't want to have underserved shippers.

The workshop date will be determined by the availability of the commissioners, the Port attorney, and the executive director.

Executive Director Dickinson offered points of clarification. If the line was to sit idle, we would receive revenue from the lessees of the railroad right of way. There have been others interested in purchasing or operating the line. WATCO shut the rail down in 2019 and we were able to find an operator.

Commissioner Watts commented that progress was made tonight.

Broadband: Dickinson announced that CERB has awarded funds to the Port in \$2+m to build broadband service to Starbuck, E911 and public safety communication towers. The project has to be completed by October 31, 2026.

Staff Reports on Community and Economic Development: Dickinson reported attending the Executive Directors Conference. The main takeaway for her was the need for policy and staff training for the use of A-I. CERB is looking to help small communities with a rural funding program. She gave them valuable input including the challenge of coming up with match dollars in small communities. Dickinson and Laib met with Jake Ball, the new manager of Seneca. The Port staff helped with and attended Evening at the Depot fundraiser. Laib reported project Clean Slate is in the building and financing stages. The ADO biennial report has been submitted. There is uncertainty about the future funding amount at this time. The legislature is working on it. Foodstock saw a nice crowd with Fall Family Festival coming up in September. Laib attended an Inland Northwest Partners conference in Malden. He assisted with the Summer Jam series and the ribbon cutting for The Scotsman event center. He continues to work on the Sesquicentennial for Columbia County. WSU is holding an acidified food training class on September 17th in Dayton.

Housing: No report.

Dayton Development Task Force: Spring and Dickinson gave a brief update on the last Task Force meeting. The main topic was the Main Street Conference which was held in Dayton recently.

Final Comments: Final comments were given prior to the Executive Session, per Attorney Bogg's suggestion. Chair Bryan asked for final public comment. Jacob Forsmann suggested holding a public meeting where only the stakeholders and the commissioners had a chance to talk. It could be held in September. Laura Aukerman asked Laib for more information on project Clean Slate. Laib was not able to share more until the party involved gives the go ahead to do so. Douglas Venn, Councilman with City of Prescott, presented a handout to the commissioners speaking to the amount of grain that comes from their area that is either trucked or railed to other locations and the concerns of the viability of the rail. Jim Kime spoke of the urgent process to get a new lease in place since the current operator is leaving. Scott Hudson stated that the rail is an irreplaceable asset and it shouldn't even be considered to sell it. This has been a waste of time and money. He suggested finding an operator and funding to improve the line. The rail needs to be improved as to operate at a higher speed to achieve more use.

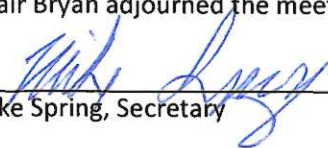
Executive Session: *Per RCW 42.30.110(i): To discuss with legal counsel representing the agency matters relating to agency enforcement actions, or to discuss with legal counsel representing the agency litigation or potential litigation to which the agency, the governing body, or a member acting in an official capacity is, or is likely to become, a party, when public knowledge regarding the discussion is likely to result in an adverse legal or financial consequence to the agency.*

The executive session began at 6:17pm and was expected to last 30 minutes, it ended at 6:39pm. No action was taken.

Approval of Vouchers: Commissioners approved regular monthly vouchers in the amount of: \$233,985.72.

08/01/2025	13642-13651	Payroll	27,760.68	08/13/2025	13675	Department of Health	103.90
08/13/2025	13652	Jennifer S Dickinson(O)	759.06	08/13/2025	13676	Dept of Commerce	13,880.87
08/13/2025	13653	Shane Laib (o)	183.40	08/13/2025	13677	Double T Construction	449.86
08/13/2025	13654	Incidental Fund	250.00	08/13/2025	13678	Enduris	75,645.00
08/13/2025	13655	2Over Publishing	505.10	08/13/2025	13679	Inland Cellular	66.74
08/13/2025	13656	Apollo Heating & Air Conditioning	1,121.40	08/13/2025	13680	Jamestown Networks	198.23
08/13/2025	13657	Banner Bank - 1585	1,354.30	08/13/2025	13681	LEAF	259.73
08/13/2025	13658	Banner Bank - 1593	1,475.05	08/13/2025	13682	MBG Cleaning Services	2,550.00
08/13/2025	13659	Banner Bank - GO Bond - 3946	2,431.59	08/13/2025	13683	One Call Concepts, Inc.	10.53
08/13/2025	13660	Banner Bank BMS #2 Bond - 9342	2,440.84	08/13/2025	13684	Pacific Northwest Waterways Assoc.	2,280.00
08/13/2025	13661	Basin Disposal Inc	69.06	08/13/2025	13685	Pacific Power	1,386.76
08/13/2025	13662	Basin Disposal of Walla Walla	139.06	08/13/2025	13686	PacifiCorp (v)	5,756.50
08/13/2025	13663	Blue Mountain Irrigation & Landscape	1,898.95	08/13/2025	13687	Performance Systems Integration, LLC	372.23
08/13/2025	13664	Blue Mountain Septic	280.00	08/13/2025	13688	Process Protection Inc.	4,000.00
08/13/2025	13665	Brewer's Bookkeeping Services	400.00	08/13/2025	13689	Roto Rooter	551.21
08/13/2025	13666	Cardmember Service	4,693.54	08/13/2025	13690	Senske	2,484.79
08/13/2025	13667	City Lumber	26.75	08/13/2025	13691	Stephens Media Group	1,400.00
08/13/2025	13668	City of Dayton	2,959.29	08/13/2025	13692	Tell It Media	2,568.02
08/13/2025	13669	Columbia iConnect	156.39	08/13/2025	13693	Urban Patterns, LLC	61,728.85
08/13/2025	13670	Crown Paper & Janitorial Supply, Inc	81.58	08/13/2025	13694	US Linen & Uniform	106.04
08/13/2025	13671	Dayton Chamber of Commerce	5,300.00	08/13/2025	13695	Valley Wide Pasco Propane	436.26
08/13/2025	13672	Dayton Chronicle	58.00	08/13/2025	13696	Waitsburg Times	378.00
08/13/2025	13673	Dayton Electric	379.40	08/13/2025	13697	Walla Walla Electric, Inc.	2,024.40
08/13/2025	13674	Dayton Mercantile	74.36	08/13/2025	13698	Washington Public Ports Assoc.	550.00

Chair Bryan adjourned the meeting at 6:39 pm.


Mike Spring, Secretary

