

WATERFRONT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, Feb 9th, 2022

Location- Port Boardroom 8:30- 9:30 am

Present:

Port Commissioner: Heather Gehring

Port Staff Members: Daryl Stafford, Genevieve Scholl

Committee Members: Mike Stroud, Scott Tennant, Mark Hickok, Josh Sceva, Aaron Baumhackl, Carlos Cornelis, Todd Anderson, Doug Newcomb

Guest: Fish and Wildlife Police Officer Quintin Nelson

Absent: Laird Davis, Adam Van denBos, Kass Bergstrom

Waterfront Strategic Plan/Visioning: Genevieve Scholl, Port Deputy Executive Director, gave the Committee an overview of the updated Port 2021-2026 Strategic Plan touching on a few overarching agreements:

- The center of Port efforts for the next 5 years will be bridge replacement effort.
- Establishing financial self-sustainability in all non-bridge arenas of Port operations is a primary concern.
- Revenue that was previously used from bridge tolls for services for non-related bridge is likely to go away.
- Port's strategy relating to funding is to find new sources of revenue and to find efficiencies to reduce costs. The intent is to maintain if not improve current levels of service before considering operational cuts.
- Aside from the bridge, the Port acknowledges that the Waterfront parks and open spaces are of the most importance to the community.

Staff Report- Waterfront Update: Daryl Stafford, Port Waterfront Manager, provided an update regarding short term and long-term projects along the Waterfront. Topics included:

- Bridge Replacement Project- The creation of the Bi-State Working Group and estimated timelines for construction and completion, along with the likely affects that will take place, with the most significant impact at the Marina Basin.
- Waterfront Capital Improvement Projects underway or soon to begin-
 - The Hook rigging area project starts this week. Funding offset by a Grant from Travel Oregon and a contribution from the CGW2.
 - Marina Boat Ramp float replacement project is out to bid this week. Construction date will likely be scheduled sometime late Fall.
 - Utilities/infrastructure for Lot #1.

- Long-term considerations for future budget requests/projects- The Committee was provided with a copy of the current CIP proposed projects for the Waterfront listed in the FY 2021/2022 budget.

Waterfront Stakeholder Discussion: Each member of this Committee represents a different user group of the Waterfront. They provide Port Staff with invaluable knowledge and experience with the issues that impact the interests of the sectors they represent. Members were asked to provide suggestions, options, and feedback to improve and enhance the Waterfront in a fiscally responsible manner that meets the need of the Community. The information provided will help the Port identify safety issues, signage needs, gaps in service, and property maintenance and facility needs. It may also be used for reviews of policy, projects, funding and putting together budget requests.

Below is a summary of the Roundtable discussion.

- **Watersport recreation, President of the Columbia Gorge Wind and Water Association (CGW2)- Mike Stroud:** Would like the Port to consider establishing a vehicle size/length limit and to prohibit trailer parking at The Hook. Overlength vehicles and vehicle/trailer combos pose safety concerns and cause congestion, therefore one option would be to limit them to parking in Lot #1. With the popularity of winging the Waterfront Park is also getting utilized a lot more so disallowing the large, oversized vehicles in that area would help with congestion. Mr. Stroud also suggested that the Port establishes a limited “no parking” area at the far South end of The Hook so vehicles could safely turn around. He also requested that law enforcement help guide him with content to use on the CGW2 website to answer questions regarding emergencies on the Columbia River Waterways and shorelines. Trash service (more receptacles) at the Hook and additional port-a-potties would be appreciated. Mr. Stroud suggested that Waterfront businesses help with trash collection/disposal on City and Port property as much of the waste comes from take out items, and that they are the direct beneficiaries of the visitor traffic.
- **Marine Law Enforcement, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife Officer- Quintin Nelson:** Mr. Nelson discussed emergency response plans and shared that water rescues are a joint effort between the Oregon and Washington Sheriff’s Departments, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Police, State Police and the Coast Guard. He will provide the CGW2 with some content for safety/emergencies for their website. He said he cannot emphasize enough that locating a person in the water can very difficult so being a really good survivor or reporting party is critical to a successful recovery. People should stay clear of responding units if they are not involved or do not have information that is pertinent. Regarding Marina security, Mr. Nelson mentioned that crime in Marinas in the Portland area has increased significantly over the last year and suggested having cameras around the Marina Basin might be helpful as they are finding there has been an uptick in thieves accessing the docks by boat. The HR Marina has been experiencing several break ins over the last few weeks.

- **Kayak/SUP community and the Gorge Paddle Center concession at Nichols Basin- Todd Anderson:** Concerns over the public's lack of awareness regarding deep water and drop offs at the beaches in Nichols Basin, specifically Frog Beach and the area next to the inlet at the north end. So many families with young kids play in that area and seem to be clueless of the hazards. He was glad to see the life jacket station however felt the Port should have better signage with pictures showing deep water and drop offs. Mr. Anderson also shared concerns about the increased E-Foils in the Basin, as it has become a popular learning area but does not blend well with existing user groups, and that the mix could be dangerous. He felt dredging the mouth for better access for the various user groups would be helpful and thought the additional swim dock mentioned in the SBP would be a wonderful addition to the area.
- **Kiting Community and Port Lesson/Rental Concessions and Kite the Gorge owner- Carlos Cornelis:** Safety concerns regarding debris out on the Sandbar and in the marsh area at the north end of Nichols Basin were expressed with suggestions to organize beach clean ups with complete removal, not just relocation of logs. Mr. Cornelis felt that dredging of the mouth of Nichols would greatly improve the area, along with improved access areas to the Basin. He encouraged Law Enforcement to allot more time on jet skis, as they are most useful for water rescues. He brought up dogs on the Spit and sandbar are an ongoing problem with the kilters and their gear, and how they don't mix. Better signage letting dog owners know that the kites are a hazard to their dogs, and their dogs (paws/nails) are a hazard to very expensive kites. He also mentioned it would be great to have more access ramps along the Hook Jetty or in front of Jensen to accommodate the influx of wing-foilers.
- **Marina Committee, member of the Hood River Yacht Club (HRYC) & Hood River Outrigger Canoe Club (HROCC) representative- Josh Sceva:** Discussed concerns over the current rate increases at the Marina and how he is worried that locals are getting priced out. He suggested that the Port offer boat and trailer dry storage (upland) in an area around the Marina Basin to help generate revenue and offset the costs of the Marina, while helping to meet the demand for the public's need for boat storage. He let the group know about the growth of the Jr. Sailing & High School Sailing programs and community involvement. Switching hats to the HROCC, Mr. Sceva felt dredging the mouth of Nichols would be a huge enhancement for the club, as it is very difficult to carry the 400lb boats in and out of the Basin. He also expressed safety concerns at Marina Beach regarding kite launching and landing, and unassuming beach goers, dog walkers and families that are in harm's way. Discontinuing kilters launching and landing in that area should be a consideration.
- **Fishing Community and Emergency Responder- Scott Tennant:** For fisherman utilizing the boat ramp, having the restrooms open and trash cans would be a big improvement and enhancement to the experience. Offering overflow parking behind the DMV would be helpful on busy days with signage letting people know where to go so that people

aren't parking in such a manner that would block an emergency vehicle from getting through. Regular length vehicles parking in spots designated for vehicles with trailers has become problematic so signage and painting the stalls would help. He noticed that the guest dock has nails backing out so for safety reasons requested or Facility crew check it out. Mr. Tennant suggested that for public information, especially people parking near the Event Site and Nichols Basin, to see if our Pay-to-Park App will send automatic messages regarding safety issues and recommended additional signage around the Basin warning of the drop offs.

- **Parks & Recreation, Director Mark Hickok:** The potential Dog Park located at the East end of the Hook has not been forgotten! They were ready to start the project but by the time they were ready to go out to bid the prices so high it was a deal breaker. Now that time has passed it has become complicated with the City, so it has become difficult to move forward. Parks & Rec hopes to regain momentum with this project when it's a better time to build. Mr. Hickok also kindly pointed out that the Port is missing one major user group representation and that is families, so he volunteered to take that position as well. He felt the Frog Beach was not a safe for he and his young family due to the drop offs, and now takes his kids to the Marina Beach. Opening the restrooms and reinstating trash service would greatly enhance that area and should be a priority for the Port. He said he picks up trash on the jetty during every visit. Mr. Hickok mentioned that the City of HR contracts out the cleaning of the restrooms at the Waterfront Park and thought the Port may want to do the same.
- **Waterfront Business Representative and owner of Solstice, Aaron Baumhackl:** Restaurateurs have taken a serious hit from Covid, especially mental stress. Solstice staff has experienced burnout, so he has had to close on Mondays and Tuesdays. They changed their business model to accommodate State Covid mandates, doing a lot more take-out. Mr. Baumhackl suggested that the Port evaluate the overall visitor experience when making decisions involving the Waterfront, with a focus on sustainability and infrastructure. The scheduling of large events is part of that, and how at peak times it's just too much to handle the additional crowds. Better signage at the entrance to direct people would be helpful. He reminded us that when the public restrooms are closed people use business restrooms putting additional strain on staff to keep up with the cleaning. Trash collection was also discussed as far as what the businesses could do better to not create extra packaging from take out orders, and the need for more trash cans on the Waterfront. The concept of the Port having Waterfront Hosts during busy times to help encourage people to do the right thing was mentioned and well received. Due to the large crowds over 4th of July and how challenging it is to deal with the crowds he thought it would be great if the fireworks were on New Year's Eve.
- **Port Event Site Host, Doug Newcomb:** Due to the large number of Event Site passes sold over the past few years there seems to be considerable confusion with what vehicles may park in various locations, and Mr. Newcomb thought the Port should work on better managing people's expectations and sense of entitlement and creating

awareness of the rules. He suggested eliminating the staff in the Event Site booth and shifting those jobs to parking enforcement (and parking education) and felt that would be a greater benefit to the Port and better PR so people aren't frustrated. People tend to park along the red curbs and pose a hazard for maneuvering large emergency vehicles, so having staff helping to move them along would be great. The increased visits of over-length big RVs towing trailers have become problematic to the Event Site as they can't make the corner at the entrance and end up driving up on the sidewalk and grass to make the turn, along with exceeding the length of the over-sized parking stalls. Limiting size/length to Lot #1 would be helpful. He also suggested that the Port doesn't close the Event Site lot when it is full, and to let people drive through and look for a spot. Staff could put up a lot full sign, but if vehicles wanted to drive in they could, and that by allowing this it would reduce people getting upset about not being able to get in when they see empty spots. Also, a review of signage at the Event Site for parking and parking hours would be good because it is currently confusing and inconsistent.