

PORT COMMISSION SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETING – Wednesday, February 15, 2023

The Port of Port Townsend Commission met in a special business session at the Point Hudson Pavilion at 355 Hudson Street, Port Townsend, WA and via Zoom online.

Present: Commissioners Hasse, Hanke and Petranek  
Executive Director Eron Berg  
Director of Finance and Administration Abigail Berg  
Operations Manager Sparks  
Harbormaster Ferrero  
Port Recorder Sanders

I. CALL TO ORDER (Rec. 00:00:42)

Commissioner Petranek called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

II. RESOLUTION #787-23 AUTHORIZING ACQUISITION OF 253 ACRES OF PROPERTY (SHORT'S FAMILY FARM)

A. Staff Presentation (Rec. 00:02:00)

Executive Director Berg led the staff presentation reviewing the documents provided with the agenda: Informational Memorandum (with purchase price, lease back provisions, contingency, and implementation timeline beginning no earlier than the fall of 2024). He reviewed the Port's authority and mission since 1926 and noted the Port would utilize State funding to support this constrained property for environmental stewardship and support of the agricultural community. He recognized concerns over the lack of a farm plan saying this would be addressed with the help of the farming community.

B. Public Comment (00:05:55)

Written comments were received from the following:

Eric Taylor provided suggestions for and urged developing land at the airport.

Al Bergstein spoke in opposition with concerns the project is outside the scope of the Port.

Bob Simmons spoke about concerns with the lack of a plan.

Howard Tucker spoke in opposition out of concern for using taxpayer funding on the project.

Janet Welch provided detailed remarks supporting the visioning but with concern about this purchase.

Tony Kastella spoke about concerns over the purchase and instead urged spending funding to fix stream flow for all users.

Eric Kingfisher written remarks were relayed about the conservation easement as well as about how the stewardship plan and conservation office work together.

In person remarks:

Jeff Kelety spoke in support and requested better financial reporting of Port spending.

Steve Dowdell, of Gray Fox Farm and representing the Short family in the sale, spoke in support of the project and for the Port involving itself in agriculture.

Joel Holtrop of the Jefferson County Conservation District, spoke about the availability of Ecology grant funding to develop a strategic plan for the watershed to address the drainage issue.

Dave Seabrook of Chimacum spoke in favor of the resolution as a good opportunity.

Teresa Hoffman resident of Jefferson County, asked about the plan and structure. As a beef producer, she is interested in USDA processing.

Janet Welch spoke to her written remarks and specifically about potential violations of the Conservation Easement (Section 3.1). She proposed an additional contingency clause.

Keith Norlin spoke about farming and fish as being incompatible and channelizing the stream being detrimental to fish. He called for fiscal responsibility and a plan.

Karen Sullivan spoke about the Port's investment in a non-port activity with concerns about the return on investment.

Tom Ehrlichman (via letter) provided detailed remarks and documents pointing out the Port has not sought alternative sites.

C. Commission Deliberation/Action (Rec. 00:41:40)

Commission: Following reading of the resolution, it was noted the Port met with State legislators on the Port's request for \$1 million. Additional remarks were that it is not unusual for a port district to get involved in agriculture. With support from the State, the remainder of the costs would fall under current spending. There was recognition of the need for a plan and shared concern that combining habitat and farming is a challenge. Noted were the core mission of economic development and Commission strategic planning goals for rebuilding and repairing core infrastructure and services for resiliency, expanding practical skills, and addressing climate concerns. Citing the farm survey, opportunities exist for growing agriculture, supporting local salmon and food production in cooperation with community partners. The Commission expressed appreciation for public input to date and concurred with the desire for a return on investment. The Port would utilize the Port-wide capital reserve fund and State revenue to purchase the farm. It was recognized the Port's organizational structure may need to change to support the effort. Addressing the public concern that riparian restoration with no net loss is possible, Director Berg noted it would be a challenge to request a legal interpretation for a hypothetical situation. There is difficulty satisfying that contingency without engaging the farming community.

**Commissioner Hanke moved to adopt Resolution 787-23 authorizing the Executive Director to sign a purchase and sale agreement to acquire the Short's Family Farm, contingent on state funding. Unanimously approved.**

IV. ADJOURNMENT(Rec: 01:15:49)

The meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m., there being no further business before the Commission.

ATTEST:

  
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Peter W. Hanke, Secretary

  
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Pamela A. Petranek, President

  
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Carol L. Hasse, Vice President