

MINUTES
PORT OF PEND OREILLE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING
Date: April 19, 2021

Call to Order:

Chairman Kiss called the special meeting of the Port of Pend Oreille Board of Commissioners to order at 10:00 a.m. in the Port office located at 1981 Black Road, Usk, Washington. In attendance: Commissioner Kiss, Commissioner D. Peterson, Commissioner K. Peterson and Port staff members Kelly Driver, Susan Bluff, Corey Ives, Derek Mead, Terry Miller, Myles Keogh, Roger Moran, Riley Bauer, Tyler Frisque, and Tom Hardwick. Also in attendance were County Commissioner Mike Manus, EDC Director Jamie Wyrobek and Newport City Administrator Russ Pelleberg. Joining via Zoom, Jessica Walston and Sonya Scauflaire from the Selkirk Sun.

Purpose: The purpose of the special meeting was to discuss Port operations. Kelly stated that she had requested the special meeting, discussing the matter with Chairman Kiss, in which staff felt there were mixed messages received in the April 13th meeting and requested clarification specifically based on the conversations regarding track expansion which was then followed with the memo from Commissioner D. Peterson regarding closing the railroad in three (3) to five (5) years.

Discussion: Chairman Kiss asked for comments. Mike Manus thanked D. Peterson for providing the memo. He stated that the rail is vital to economic development within Pend Oreille County which currently has the second highest unemployment in the State at 9.9 percent. He said the memo was premature in being sent out with the upcoming sale of the Ponderay Newsprint site. Rail and Fiber are two very important features that the County has to offer. Additional comments included Vaagen's potential expansion and need for rail, zoning, and infrastructure in the County.

Russ Pelleberg asked about the Port's vision and what prompted D. Peterson to send the memo at this time? He voiced his agreement with Mr. Manus that it was bad timing. Russ also discussed marketing efforts in the City of Newport which includes a 10-acre site in Newport that fronts the railroad.

Jamie Wyrobek said the memo was very articulate but agreed with Mr. Manus and Mr. Pelleberg that the timing was bad, and it was very premature to discuss shutting down the railroad. She communicated that the Ponderay site is the only site in the entire County with all the infrastructure including rail and appropriate zoning for any kind of industrial development.

D. Peterson talked about the Port's Comprehensive Plan, the need to plan for five to 20 years, the BNSF agreement, the north end of the rail line. Additionally, that the May meeting is right before filing week for Ryan and Keith and this would provide them an opportunity to support their opinions.

R. Kiss stated that he liked the document but felt those were discussion points, not a document to be sent out without further discussion between the Board and staff. He also read a statement regarding his thoughts on D. Peterson's memo which talked about the success of the railroad to adapt to changes, the importance of the railroad to neighboring Bonner County mills which provide jobs to Pend Oreille County residents and businesses, as well as the need to support, without duplicating, EDC efforts. He agreed that an exit strategy is good to have but that an exit strategy can change daily.

K. Peterson expressed that the timing was the horrible. He explained the Port's revenues and that they all come down from rail operations; to take that money from rail operations is wrong.

Action:

Chairman Kiss moved, regarding the memo dated 4/13/2021 issued by Port Commissioner Dan Peterson, distributed, and read by him during the April 13th Board meeting, which clearly states the information provided in the memo is his opinion only, and which was subsequently distributed by him to individuals and/or businesses without our knowledge; that we formally voice our respective disagreement with that memo. That staff is directed to continue existing operations, to work with appropriate entities to maintain and improve rail service, and to support the efforts of the EDC and others with any assistance possible for economic development without the need for an Executive Director. Kelly is to draft a letter that the Port will continue to operate the rail line, the draft is to be sent to the Board for input and Ryan will sign the letter on behalf of the Board. It will be sent to all of the individuals that were on D. Peterson's list. Motion seconded by K. Peterson.


Discussion followed which included D. Peterson commenting that he regrets that the five points he raised were not discussed. R. Kiss feels this can be discussed more at the May meeting, but it was wrong to send the memo out without Board knowledge. D. Peterson disagreed that it was without Board knowledge.

Chairman Kiss called for a vote: in favor K. Peterson, and R. Kiss, opposed none, with D. Peterson abstaining.

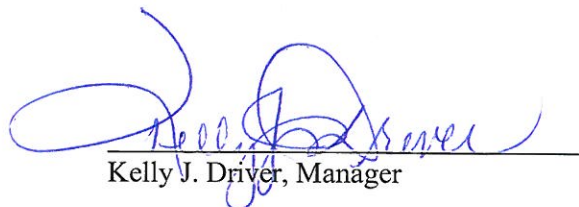
Additional Discussion:

Mike Manus followed up with comments that the Port involvement with the EDC is the best it has been in a long time, that the EDC is the strongest that it has been since he has been a County Commissioner too. He believes that dropping rail is a big mistake for our County; the infrastructure at the Ponderay is all inclusive for future operations including possibly a business park with the Port as a managing entity, depending on the bidding on the 23rd of this month.

Adjourn: There being no further business Chairman Kiss adjourned the meeting at 10: 42 a.m.



Ryan Kiss, Chairman



Kelly J. Driver, Manager

Date Approved: 05-11-21