

**SPECIAL MEETING
PEND OREILLE COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES
WORKSHOP
SEPTEMBER 11, 2024**

Lions Club Depot, 101 Railroad Avenue, Ione, WA. 99139 (no virtual option available).

The meeting of the PUD, County, and Port Commissioners and Kalispel Tribe was called to order by Port Chair, Ryan Kiss at 9:02 a.m.

Attendance:

Representing the PUD were Joe Onley, Dave Rick, and arriving later were John Janney and Joe Hathaway.

County representatives were John Gentle, Brian Smiley and Robert Rosencrantz.

Port representatives were Ryan Kiss, Kim Gentle, Kelly Driver, and Jessica Garza.

Tribal representative was Mark Zorica.

Also attending were Gretchen Koenig representing Responsible Growth Northwest and Gayle Pollock with the North Pend Oreille Valley Lions Club. Sonya Scaufaire of the Selkirk Sun arrived at 10:00 a.m.

Public Comments: County Commissioner John Gentle requested a moment of silence in remembrance of those lost on September 11, 2001. After the moment of silence, Joe Onley led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Gretchen Koenig voiced her concern that the Feasibility Study projects were not adequately advertised. Port staff responded that Commerce had given a very short timeline for the completion of the entire project, the date and time of the meeting was made in press releases to the Newport Miner and Selkirk Sun as well as being announced on social media.

Minutes: June 12, 2024 corrections or additions (not voting). No corrections or additions were noted.

Presentation: Discussion was held on the content Pend Oreille County Representatives meeting.

Kim Gentle proposed a standardized agenda for the meetings suggesting three buckets of information; Legislative issues which affect our County, Economic Development, and Infrastructure which would include, but not be limited to, planning, land use, the railroad and wildfire mitigation.

Additional discussion items included:

- A commitment to action from each entity; homework action, not voting action.
- Bringing ideas to the meetings.
- Working on joint letters of support when applicable and appropriate.
- Identification of the stakeholders and deliverables needed.
- Adding action items to make the meeting time productive.
- Having more structure.
- If presentations or action items were made or taken, they need to be relevant to all entities.
- Each organization has the ability to join in any joint projects or to decline to participate.

John Gentle said that the first quarter of each year is the heart of legislative issues and legislative sessions. He suggested that the County take on the legislative matters in Q1, the PUD in Q2 and the Port in Q3. Fourth quarter meetings would be dependent on needs of the group, budget times and holidays.

Discussion continued regarding the PUD's power issues, including nuclear possibilities and the PUD ramping up on their 10-year strategic planning.

Action item: The Port will build a standard agenda for discussion at the next meeting which will be held by the PUD. The PUD will also send out an email to check schedules for a fourth quarter meeting or if the meeting will be held in the first quarter of 2025.

Review Goals from Previous Meeting: Vision Statement:

Kelly Driver collected ideas on vision statements and put together a list of five possibilities.

- #1 – Working together to enhance the quality of life for residences and businesses of Pend Oreille County, today, tomorrow and generations to come.
- #2 – To preserve and enhance the way of life for all Pend Oreille citizens by identifying common goals and sharing resources to achieve them.
- #3 – Public servants working together to create a brighter future for Pend Oreille County.
- #4 – Convening quarterly to harvest ideas for the betterment of Pend Oreille.
- #5 – Working collaboratively to sustain our rural lifestyle, promote our County's assets, and advance the quality of life for Pend Oreille County residents and businesses.

Around the room preferences were called for from the elected officials and Tribal representation: Kim Gentle #2, Joe Onley #4, Dave Rick #1, Brian Smiley #2, Robert Rosencrantz #2, John Gentle #2, Ryan Kiss #2, Mark Zorica #2.

The Vision Statement selected by the Pend Oreille Representatives present is “To preserve and enhance the way of life for all Pend Oreille citizens by identifying common goals and sharing resources to achieve them.”

Goal Setting and Planning:

Reports:

1. PUD –

Joe Onley:

- The PUD has a lot of balls in the air right now.
- They have a new manager who is doing a great job.
- Working on wildfire mitigation planning is underway.
- Wage and salary survey in progress .
- Safety reviews are being conducted.
- Rate study is in motion.
- A 10-year strategic plan is being developed.
- Staff recently began a four-day work week which makes the employees happy.

Dave Rick:

- The PNW has historically been an exporter of power.
- 30-day battery backup systems are needed.
- Resource adequacy is important.
- The PUD is keeping an eye on the future needs of the County.
- Work continues on two substation locations.

John Janney:

- All the balls in the air make up the whole piece for PUD operations.
- Big milestones are coming up for timelines and resources.
- Predicts that in the mid 2030’s the PUD will be short on load capacity.
- Climate Commitment Act (CCA) free allowance credits, not needed for the PUD’s own compliance obligations, can be sold at auction . The PUD should know soon what their net proceeds are on this sale.

2. County:

Brian Smiley:

- Discussed the vision statement and preserving the County.
- Road systems and the law enforcement department are deteriorating due to inadequate funding.

- The revenue situation is not improving for the County.
- The Commissioners will have to make some sober decisions to balance the budget.
- The culture in the County has changed; the tax burden used to be on industries. Without industry, the tax burden shifts to small businesses and private citizens.
- We need to save our economy. We need industry in our County and we need to find solutions to fix the issues.

Robert Rosencrantz:

- There are great people here. Residents are older and need essential services.
- Existing sites need repurposed for new uses.
- Infrastructure needs to be sustained.
- The County needs to help municipalities with their infrastructure needs.
- State departments want to help get things done in rural areas.

John Gentle:

- Budget season is in progress; the Commissioners are working with department heads, the finance manager, and the County Auditor. It takes 3-4 months of meetings to get through the budget process.
- Wildfire Defense Grant work is underway. The PUD and Port need to be a part of this grant.

3. Port

Ryan Kiss/Kelly Driver:

- We currently have two full time permanent positions open.
- We are working on a Transportation Grant for Highway 2 near the City of Newport for potential future development of Port property.
- Staff is working on a grant that would fund, or partially fund, apprenticeship positions.
- Work is underway on a grant for a grant writer. This grant, if awarded, may make a grant writer available for other entities, businesses, and/or 501C3 organizations.
- Staff is working on options for the Wolfred Industrial Park.

Kim Gentle:

- Record inflation makes it challenging to keep staff. We need to keep people in the county working, not moving out for better wages.
- The Port shop is continuing its work on the Tier 4 locomotive conversions.
- Thanked the group for listening to the Community; public conversations are important.

Jessica Garza:

- Working with other rural county ADO's. There is a disparity in funding for rural vs. the larger cities.
- There are impressive development projects going on across the State. These developments take massive amounts of time, funding, land, and infrastructure.
- The Port of Vancouver has a market on the river; the Port withheld a portion of this area for local entities to market their products.
- The Port of Pasco just used TIF (Tax Incremental Financing) for an agricultural fertilizer company to locate in their area. One of the top officials with the company is a Cusick High School graduate.

4. Kalispel Tribe

Mark Zorica:

- The Camas Clinic expansion project broke ground in June. It is a \$15 million expansion. It will add an optometry department, expand massage therapy, chiropractic, and physical therapy. Medical and dental upgrades will be state-of-the-art technology. Parking is a challenge during the construction.
- They are helping the Town of Cusick with their infrastructure needs. The Town is making great progress.
- They are building new houses in Cusick. The Tribe can get funding faster.
- The Tribe has invested over \$186,000 in Pend Oreille County so far in 2024.
- The Kalispel Career Training Center has its apprenticeship program registered with the Department of Labor.

Next Meeting:

1. Topics for Discussion- Kim Gentle and Kelly Driver will work on building a Standardized agenda to be discussed further at the next meeting.
2. Date, Location and Host Verification – The PUD will be the host for the next meeting. Depending on availability of the three public agency representatives, this meeting may be held in the fourth quarter of 2024 or may be pushed back to the first quarter of 2025. The PUD will work on possible dates.
3. Other
 - a. Thank you from the group to the Lions Club for hosting the meeting.
 - b. Sonya Scaufaire reminded everyone of the Vietnam Veterans Celebration and the Candidate Debate at the Camas Center on October 3rd.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 10:43 a.m. by Port Chair, Ryan Kiss.