



125 Easy St
Wenatchee, WA

NEWS RELEASE

January 23, 2007 – for immediate release

Subject: Port of Chelan County facilitating growth in local tourism & alternative energy industry clusters

Contact: Ron Johnston-Rodriguez, Economic Development Director, (509) 663-5159

At a regular meeting January 10th, Port of Chelan County commissioners authorized real estate consultant Jon Eberle to contact three parties that have expressed interest in purchasing all or part of a 60-acre parcel of the Port's Peshastin mill site property. Commissioners passed a resolution in December declaring the property surplus to the Port's needs, a step which the Port's legal counsel said was necessary before any substantive discussions about purchase could begin.

Executive Director Mark Urdahl told commissioners he was aware of three inquiries about the Peshastin property before it was declared surplus and, under advice from legal counsel, did not substantively respond to the inquiries. The commissioners directed Eberle to contact the three parties about their general interest in the property and convey the Port's desire to keep the Peshastin community informed if any of the discussions lead to a solid proposal.

At their regular January 17 meeting, Port commissioners heard an update from Economic Development Director Ron Johnston-Rodriguez about several industry clusters on which the Port is focusing. Johnston-Rodriguez said he has been observing a convergence of opportunities and activities among these clusters which include an alternative energy/transportation initiative as well as wine tourism, outdoor recreation tourism, and agricultural tourism.

Johnston-Rodriguez described progress being made by partners in the Port-led Advanced Vehicle Initiative (AVI) Consortium. Consortium members are planning a second summit on plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs), with statewide transportation industry representatives and fleet managers as the intended audience. The summit, called "Power Up! Electrify Transportation," will be held May 14 and 15, 2007, at the Wenatchee Convention Center. Johnston-Rodriguez noted that GM, Ford, Nissan, Toyota, DaimlerChrysler and International all have announced their purposed objectives to develop PHEVs within the next few years. According to Johnston-Rodriguez, "They all need places to road-test a variety of batteries and grid-tie systems for this technology...This is a great opportunity for the Wenatchee area to position itself as a center for testing and demonstration of plug-in hybrids, which is one of the goals of the AVI."

The Port, and Chelan and Douglas counties, are members of Plug-In Partners, a national campaign that began a year ago with the aim of convincing automakers of the need to produce PHEVs.

Johnson-Rodriguez also commented that the campaign is succeeding and automakers now see a market for plug-in hybrids and are scrambling to get them manufactured.

Johnston-Rodriguez outlined for commissioners the progress being achieved by the Port's agency partners in forming the Greater Columbia Water Trail. A National Parks Service grant for facilitation has helped the water trail steering committee develop its organizational structure, agree on operating procedures, identify projects, and set priorities. A grant from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is paying for logo design and signage along riverbanks on 500 miles of the Columbia and tributary rivers between Canada and the Tri-Cities. Public utility districts and other agencies and organizations in 11 counties also are joining the coalition. Johnston-Rodriguez said the Greater Columbia Water Trail's mission is to enhance recreation and an appreciation of the Columbia watershed's natural and cultural resources by developing water trails for flatwater paddling sports.

In other business, Port commissioners:

* authorized Pangborn Memorial Airport Manager Pat Moore to sign off on design work that was prepared by RH2 Engineering Professional Services for security fencing around the airport. Moore said funding for installation of the fencing will come from existing ticket fees. The project will go out for bid by early March.

-end-