



NEWS RELEASE

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Subject: Port of Chelan County commissioners receive updates on port projects

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Port of Chelan County commissioners met in regular session on Wednesday, April 11th at the Confluence Technology Center. A portion of the meeting was conducted via videoconference with consultants Karyn Criswell and John White reported from Vancouver, Wash., who recently conducted interviews with a diverse group of more than 40 stakeholders. Respondents were asked about a variety of issues, including their perceptions of the Port, the value of public-private partnerships, the role the Port should play in mixed-use development projects, and what priorities the Port should pursue in its investment of fiscal and human resources. These interviews will serve as an integral part of the development of the Port's comprehensive plan.

"The main theme we heard was that people who know the Port are favorably impressed, but feel the community as a whole doesn't understand your function," Criswell commented., "They'd like to see you out front in a bolder, stronger way. This suggests a need for more public outreach and media exposure. They also understand the importance of Pangborn Memorial Airport and are highly supportive of the improvements that will be required to meet future needs of the airlines that will serve the community."

Criswell also reported that the interviewees perceive the local economic climate as healthy. Though they acknowledge the decline in the traditional agricultural industry, the stakeholders are encouraged by the growth of agricultural tourism. Those interviewed believe the Port, in its investment in economic development, should capitalize on the region's natural beauty and quality of life – and should seek to lure employers in high-tech, natural resources and sustainable energy fields.

White said stakeholders showed support for the Port's involvement in mixed-use development projects such as the Wenatchee riverfront, insofar as it doesn't supplant the private sector. JD White/Berger ABAM will prepare a report to Port commissioners that will frame such policy issues as increased visibility and communication, transparency in decision-making, partnerships, general economic development focus, and key initiatives after which they will recommend goals and strategies in support of a range of policies. The comprehensive planning effort will culminate in a series of public meetings later this year.

George Valison, executive director of the Columbia Cascade Winery Association, described the rapid growth that the local wine industry has enjoyed during the past five years. “When we began, we had three member wineries,” he commented. “Now there are 39 wineries in the region, with 26 in Chelan County that belong to the association.” He noted that regional groups in Chelan, Wenatchee, and Leavenworth operate under the CCWA umbrella.

Valison told commissioners that part of the Port’s investment of \$20,000 toward marketing the region as a wine destination is going toward printing 100,000 copies of a multi-page booklet with a driving map that unfolds from the center. Most of these will be distributed along the Interstate 5 corridor, as well as through national groups such as AAA and American Tours International.

In other business commissioners:

- * Heard a presentation by Scott Renick, regional audit manager for the State Auditor’s Office, about performance audits that will be conducted at public agencies as a result of Initiative 900. The initiative, approved by voters in 2005, requires that agencies be audited in order to identify services that can be improved, reduced, eliminated, or transferred to the private sector; itemize cost savings; analyze roles and functions, and make recommendations for eliminating overlaps; establish self-assessment systems; and investigate the feasibility of pooling information technology systems. Renick said the Port is not identified this year for a performance audit;

- * Authorized Pangborn Memorial Airport manager Pat Moore to sign a \$32,175 contract with KB&S Environmental for asbestos removal in the old terminal building;

- * Heard from Confluence Technology Center Manager Laura Jaecks that a delegation of 70 business owners representing the Puget Sound Prosperity Partnership will visit Wenatchee in June to learn about successful economic development projects in Central Washington. The Prosperity Partnership, a coalition of 210 public-private-labor entities in the Puget Sound region, is working to facilitate long-term economic prosperity with the goal of creating 100,000 new jobs by 2013. Jaecks said it is focusing on such industries as aerospace, clean technology, wise sciences, information technology, and logistics of international trade. They will tour the Confluence Technology Center as part of their visit.

- * Established an agenda for an all-day board workshop on May 2 in Chelan; and

- * Convened in executive session to discuss real estate matters.