

P O R T O F O L Y M P I A C O M M I S S I O N
M I N U T E S O F W O R K S E S S I O N

April 16, 2008

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Telford called the work session of April 16, 2008, to order at 2:03 p.m. at the Port Offices. Commissioner Barner was also in attendance. President McGregor was home ill.

Staff in attendance were: Executive Director Ed Galligan, Administrative Manager Jeri Sevier, Airport Director Rudy Rudolph, Finance Director Steve Davis, Harbor Director Bruce Marshall, Marketing Director Kari Qvigstad, Property Manager Clarita Mattox, and Communications Manager Patti Grant. Jason Robertson attended in consulting mode for the Communications agenda item.

Public in attendance were as follows: Representing The Olympian was Jim Szymanski. Others in attendance included: Harold Clark, Steve Wilcox, Richard Wolf, Pat Rants, Charlie Haney, and Becky Holt.

Market District Parking

Ms. Kari Qvigstad provided the Commission background on the Market District parking. She noted that there are developer interests in a new building in the district. The Market parking is at capacity and the contract parking restricts timing.

She noted that the Market District success has exceeded expectations and the parking demand is increasing. The current lease for parking includes off-site parking and current development utilizes surface parking. There is limited space for additional development. She noted that we are currently using Marine Terminal land for off-site district parking to defer Port capital funding.

Ms. Qvigstad reported that the budget for 2008 does not include a parking solution for the Market District. She indicated that this is not a top priority or goal for the Port as adopted by the Commission for 2008. She indicated that if the Commission would like to elevate this project, that direction needs to be communicated to staff.

Ms. Qvigstad reviewed the current contracts and agreements in place with the market tenants. She noted that a parking structure is needed to fulfill the parking needs in the Market District, however, planning for the parking structure was put on hold since this project is not in the budget. She noted that staff is working with stakeholders to confirm the need for additional parking.

She reviewed the challenges and opportunities with the district. There is a demand for parking and there is a developer that would like to build a new building, however, there are land and financing limitations. She noted that there could be no further development in the Market District until we fulfill a contract for surface parking. She indicated that the Commission would need to provide staff with guidance on whether or not the Port should develop a parking structure now or later. The Commission could also decide to acquire more land to expand the district.

Ms. Qvigstad indicated that staff needs to evaluate other sites for additional parking for the market district. Mr. Galligan suggested evaluating the parcel set aside for the Administrative Port Building. She noted that staff needs time to identify some interim or long term solutions.

Commissioner Telford asked what needs the parking alternative is designed to fulfill. Ms. Qvigstad indicated it would meet the needs for the parking on the Marine Terminal and the Market Center Building and surrounding needs. Ms. Qvigstad indicated that this project has been put on hold. Commissioner Telford indicated that if this project were elevated as a priority, what current project would suffer? Ms. Qvigstad indicated that this project could replace the efforts put into the NorthPoint project, or we could continue to do them both and do them both more slowly.

Commissioner Barner asked if we could form a group to create a Parking Improvement District (PID) and we could get others to participate in a joint venture. He also wondered if there was state or other funding available to help building structured parking.

Commissioner Telford indicated that he thought the developer should take the lead in trying to put together some alternatives for making structured parking feasible.

Ms. Qvigstad noted that the question is whether the Commission wants staff to spend time with the interested developer on parking solutions.

Commissioner Telford indicated that he did not want to see the NorthPoint project stopped. Ms. Qvigstad indicated we will be having discussion on NorthPoint at the May work session, the notion of public process will slow down the process and consume staff time.

Commissioner Telford suggested that the Port secure someone that can pull the information together on the Market District parking issues and come back with updated cost estimates and updated plans and come back with a more definitive look at the alternatives. Commissioner Barner indicated that he would like exploration on the PID.

Pat Rants indicated that the Rants Group is very interested in building a new building and would like to participate in long-term contracts for parking spaces in a parking garage.

Communications

Commissioner Telford indicated that he has asked for this topic to be discussed because there is a communications issue with the public. There are perceptions about staff and commissioners. Some of these are related to past practices and the recent election was reflective of the public opinion.

He noted that he had discussions of the public perceptions with the Mayor's Forum where he received some feedback. He has also received some feedback from other sources. He suggested that we need to think about getting our message out about what we are doing at the Port. He had some examples from some other jurisdictions. He noted that we need to look at our methods and our formats on how we communicate and learn from other jurisdictions. We need to do a better job of putting out our own information and not rely on the Olympian for what they print. He also noted that we need to do a better job of anticipating issues and how we respond or react. And finally he noted that we need to work on regaining the public credibility.

Commissioner Barner commented that the message that the Port sends to the citizens of Thurston County needs to be looked at. He noted that when he was at the County, they hired someone to help develop a slogan that says what we are about and what we are trying to do.

Commissioner Telford commented that it is the way we have done this that has caused concern. We have not done a good job of clearing the air and getting the facts out so that the people in doubt have both sides of the story.

Commissioner Barner indicated that we are about creating economic opportunity for all Thurston County citizens and that should be our slogan.

Mr. Robertson indicated that Port's are not cities, they need to be transparent, but they also have businesses to run. He indicated that last year he looked at commission meetings, which is currently the most visible to the community. He noted that the internal communications need to be functioning properly first before you extend to the external audience.

Mr. Robertson indicated that the Commission meetings are not the proper place to have a dialog. This has to be done before or after the commission meetings. The Commission needs to know what people want and try to head it off upfront, especially on the environmental issues. Mr. Robertson indicated that there needs to be more commission-staff briefings. Staff and the Commissioners need to work things out before commission meetings and not on TV. He provided the example of the other night when Commissioners were offering many amended motions.

Mr. Robertson also advised the Commissioners that they should not slouch or roll their eyes. The Commissioners or staff needs to respond to citizens, maybe not at that meeting, take comments and respond at the next meeting. He advised them to not get into dialog at the meeting, get back to them with a response.

Commissioner Telford indicated that we give several opportunities for public comment however some jurisdictions only allow one time. Jason indicated that there are several ways to gain comments.

Commissioner Barner indicated that he feels it is important for staff to advocate positions. They are hired professionals and the Commission needs to hear that point of view, he commented that the Commissioners don't have to agree, but the staff point of view should be heard.

Commissioner Telford indicated that they need to be finding a consensus and staff needs to understand where a commissioner stands on an issue.

Mr. Robertson suggested that we get our word out and maybe doing a video about a topic on TCTV, having a “Commissioners Corner” on TCTV. He noted that there needs to be a program and start spreading the word, meet with groups to talk about what the Port does.

Commissioner Telford indicated that the problem is that we have been televising for 6 years, and others are exploiting the TV and we haven’t figured out how to react to that. Mr. Robertson indicated that this is free TV time for others to get their message out. He noted that we need to connect with community to help them understand what you are doing and why it is important.

Commissioner Barner indicated that we should request that the Port have space in chamber newsletters and other entity newsletters to get our message out, like the EDC. Commissioner Telford commented that we would need to target specific areas and do information piece – not just fluff. Commissioner Barner suggested holding listening posts; he commented that actions speak louder than words.

Mr. Robertson suggested that the executive directors report should set the tone for the meetings and we should be reporting about the positive things the Port is doing.

Commissioner Telford suggested that we need more public involvement in a work session on separate issues, like the ethics policy, we need to get more feedback from the public in an informal setting and let people express their views. Commissioner Barner suggested using neighborhood associations to get the word out on those issues since we do not have a staff to do this.

Ethics Resolution

Commissioner Telford indicated that the draft resolution presented to the Commission was mainly his comments that he suggested at the last meeting. He noted that he had a few more minor changes to the order of the gifts section. Commissioner Barner indicated that generally speaking he was supportive of changes added by Commissioner Telford. Commissioner Telford indicated that the enforcement section needs to be reviewed by legal counsel.

Mr. Galligan indicated that Commissioner McGregor, in his absence, submitted concerns that need to be discussed. The Commission asked Mr. Galligan to work with Commissioner McGregor to incorporate his changes. Mr. Galligan indicated that when he has consensus on the document he will re-circulate and then we can post it on website for public comment prior to the adoption at a future commission meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Telford adjourned the meeting of April 16, 2008 at 5:00 p.m.

PORT OF OLYMPIA COMMISSION

President

Vice President

Secretary-Treasurer