

# MEETING MINUTES

Port of Tacoma Commission



## REGULAR MEETING

**May 20, 2025 - 12:00 p.m. Public Session Start**

**Fabulich Center, Room #104: 3600 Port of Tacoma Road, Fife**

The Port of Tacoma Commission met for a regular meeting on **May 20, 2025**, at the Fabulich Center, 3600 Port of Tacoma Road, Fife, WA. Commissioners Deanna Keller, John McCarthy, and Don Meyer were present in-person. Commissioners Kristin Ang and Dick Marzano attended the meeting virtually. A quorum was met.

### **CALL TO ORDER | EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Commissioner John McCarthy, Port of Tacoma Commission President, called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. and announced the Commission would meet in Executive Session until 12:00 p.m. to discuss:

- One (1) Evaluation of a Public Employee RCW 42.30.110(1)(g)
- Two (2) Potential Litigation Items RCW 42.30.110(1)(i)
- Two (2) Sale or Lease of Real Estate Items RCW 42.30.110(1)(c)

Eric Johnson (Executive Director—Port of Tacoma) stated the factors allowed to be discussed during Executive Session in relation to a real estate lease or sale are as follows: size and zoning of the property, distance from and connectivity to deep-water marine terminals, potential for job creation, and consistency with the Strategic Plan.

At 11:59 a.m. President McCarthy announced that the Executive Session would be extended by 15 minutes.

### **1. RETURN TO ORDER & FLAG SALUTE:**

Commissioner McCarthy returned the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m. and stated the Commission met in Executive Session from 10:00 a.m. until 12:10 p.m. The public meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner McCarthy also acknowledged that we are situated on the traditional homelands of the Puyallup Tribe, who steward these lands, and stated the Commission considers the Tribe to be a partner in many of the efforts we undertake.

Commissioner McCarthy recognized May 2025 as Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month and called upon the people of Pierce County to recognize the achievements and many contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders to our community, our nation and our world.

### **2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Commissioner McCarthy sought approval of the agenda. There were no objections or changes. The agenda was approved unanimously as posted.

### **3. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Eric Johnson:**

- **Workforce Development:** The Port has had a very substantial workforce development initiative over the last year or so. Some highlights include exposing over 9,000 high school and middle school students to the maritime trades. Last Friday we were the signature sponsor of the Pierce County Career Day at the Western Washington Fairgrounds; over 1,000 high school students attended. He stated that he really wanted to call out and thank our Maintenance and Security Departments for being there, showing enthusiasm and talking with the students about the good jobs available in those trades.

On May 8<sup>th</sup> the Fife Milton Edgewood Chamber of Commerce held their After-Hours event with the kids from Fife High School, who came in and exhibited their artwork representing the Port of Tacoma, following a Port tour. Commissioner Meyer was there and made some remarks. Commissioner Marzano was also present.

- **Ports & Popcorn Program:** We continue to discover the immense popularity of our Ports & Popcorn series at The Grand Cinema. The first two sold out; we had a Puget Sound Pilot come in and speak at the most recent event. The third one is coming up on June 12th, featuring a tugboat captain; however, this event is already sold out with a waiting list. These are free events, but do require a ticket, as space is limited. "I think we have found a very interesting public outreach strategy there", stated Johnson.
- **2025 Farmers Markets:** As the weather gets better, we are going to start our farmers market series. The Port will have a booth at markets throughout the county during the summer and you can go to our website to see where our market booths are going to be.
- **New Chief, HR:** Director Johnson introduced the Port of Tacoma's new Chief Human Resources Officer, Vanessa Audett, who gave brief comments.

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#### 4. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

- **Larry Viguerie**, Marine View Drive Resident: Spoke in opposition to the Port's ECHO (East Commencement Habitat Opportunity) project on Marine View Drive.
- **Barbara Berntsen**, Marine View Drive Resident: Also spoke in opposition to the Port's ECHO project. She asked the following questions, which Port staff will follow up on and provide answers to Ms. Berntsen:

##### **Questions:**

1. Does the Port, in fact, have funding for the ECHO project?
2. The remaining cabins take up approximately 225' linear feet of waterfront. Is that property really needed for the ECHO project to go forward?
3. Did my attendance at the Commission meeting earlier this year (when I engaged with Commissioner Meyer and the ECHO project was approved) "spur" the Port's action to remove the remaining cabins?

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#### 5. **CONSENT AGENDA:**

- A. Approve minutes: 3/25/25 and 4/15/25
- B. Approve disbursement certifications during the period of 4/06/25 to 5/09/25:  
Check numbers 2049 to 2348, in the amount of \$10,643,622.68, and electronic payments, in the amount of \$4,535,109.32, for a total of \$15,178,732.00.
- C. Utility License Agreements: BNSF Railroad
- D. Release of Right of First Refusal: 2007 Stewart Street & 1621 Lincoln Avenue

##### **MOTION: Approve the Consent Agenda as presented.**

*Motion was made by Commissioner Meyer and seconded by Commissioner Keller.*

##### **VOTE: Motion Carried 5-0**

Commissioner Ang	Aye
Commissioner Keller	Aye
Commissioner McCarthy	Aye
Commissioner Marzano	Aye
Commissioner Meyer	Aye

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#### 6. **ISSUE BRIEFING:**

##### **Urban Waters Project Briefing**

Joel Baker (Port of Tacoma Endowed Chair, Urban Waters, UW Tacoma) and Jim Waldo (Chair, Urban Waters Advisory Board) presented:

1. Twenty years ago, the Port of Tacoma and the University of Washington Tacoma signed an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) establishing an endowed chair, which became Urban Waters, an organization dedicated to environmental water restoration and stewardship. They thanked the Port for the initial support and discussed the impacts from their programs. Dr. Baker and Jim Waldo invited the Port to again partner with them as they chart the next steps.
2. Urban Waters 101 and the handout were discussed. They gave a few examples of what Urban Waters has done and what they plan to do going forward.
3. Urban Waters' workforce development programs were discussed. They work with Maritime Blue and the Port. At UWT, they stood up the Bachelor's degree engineering programs, to include electrical, mechanical and civil engineering. Students are now actively engaged in these degree programs.
4. Urban Waters recently started a project with UWT, POT, and Washington State Ecology with fieldwork around sources of BCPs and contaminants in the Tideflats. The beneficial use of sediment is dependent on it being clean. However, we have found residual contamination. This study conducted fieldwork to collaboratively identify the sources and they are currently in the design phase.
5. Commissioners expressed appreciation for the partnership and the importance of Urban Waters' work. Commissioner McCarthy served on Urban Waters board for six years; Commissioner Ang now serves.

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**7. COMMISSION ACTIONS:**

**A. Watershed Source Tracing Project & Grant Authorization:**

Jason Jordan (Sr. Director—Environmental & Planning) presented on behalf of the Port.

**MOTION: Authorize the following:**

- (1) The Executive Director or his delegate to accept \$465,000 from Ecology's *Puget Sound National Estuary Program – Stormwater Initiate – Mega Toxics grant program* to support the Port of Tacoma's Watershed Source Tracing Project.
- (2) \$715,000, for a total authorized amount of \$800,000, for work associated with the Port of Tacoma's Watershed Source Tracing Project [Project ID 101710.01].

*Motion was made by Commissioner Keller and seconded by Commissioner Meyer. Discussion ensued:*

1. The background was reviewed, including 880 acres of upland cleanup the Port has accomplished.
2. We knew back in 2012 there were PCB's in the waterways. We dug the contaminated soil out and removed them, but there was a rebound a few years later. There are additional sources out there. Contaminants are also found in fish tissue, and we are doing extensive testing in the waterways. Still, preliminarily, we have determined there are about 2.5 million yards that need to come out of the channel, about 400 cubic yards.
3. With this grant there will be community engagement – primarily through UWT and Urban Waters.
4. Sampling and analysis methods have changed and improved with time. On the current timeline, we anticipate project closeout in December of 2027.
5. The financials of this project were reviewed. To complete this work, staff estimates it will cost approximately \$1M. This request is for \$715,000. Staff may return to the Commission if more funds are needed.
6. Source control work at the Port was discussed, as well as the results of our regular testing. We want to look beyond Port properties, as we are confident that we are not the source.

**VOTE: Motions Carried 5-0**

Commissioner Ang	Aye
Commissioner Keller	Aye
Commissioner Marzano	Aye
Commissioner McCarthy	Aye
Commissioner Meyer	Aye

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**B. Commission Annual Evaluation of Executive Director:**

Commissioner McCarthy presented the annual evaluation of the Port of Tacoma Executive Director:

**MOTION:** Approve the Executive Director's compensation change with a 5.5% increase and an \$8,400 yearly total auto allowance, for a total compensation package of \$290,150/year effective 5/20/25.

*Motion was made by Commissioner Meyer and seconded by Commissioner Keller.*

*The annual performance review letter from the Commission was read into the record. Discussion ensued and commissioners gave their comments.*

**VOTE: Motion Carried 5-0**

Commissioner Ang	Aye
Commissioner Keller	Aye
Commissioner Marzano	Aye
Commissioner McCarthy	Aye
Commissioner Meyer	Aye

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**C. Blair Waterway Deepening Program Authorizations:**

Sara Potter (Project Manager II—Environmental) & Tony Warfield (Environmental) led the presentation:

**MOTION #1 of #4 - Blair Navigation Channel Deepening Design:**

**Authorize an increase in the amount of \$685,000, for a total authorized amount of \$6,300,000.**

**MOTION #2 of #4 - Tru-Grit Remedial Action:**

**Authorize an increase in the amount of \$910,000, for a total authorized amount of \$1,185,000.**

**MOTION #3 of #4 - Blair Tribal Cutback Implementation:**

**Authorize an increase in the amount of \$1,134,000, for a total authorized amount of \$1,334,000.**

**MOTION #4 of #4 - Lincoln Avenue Ditch Remedial Action:**

**Authorize \$763,000, for a total authorized amount of \$763,000.**

*Motion for all four actions was made by Commissioner Meyer and seconded by Commissioner Keller. Discussion ensued:*

1. The overall project and each of the four parts were reviewed in detail. We are on-schedule. There are several dependencies, ie. A has to be completed prior to B starting, etc. The Corps will start the dredging in the middle of the Blair Waterway. The Corps won't do this before the Tribal cutback. The Tribal cut-back won't be done until the remedial ditch action is done. These projects are very intertwined.
2. The economic investment is vital to keeping our waterways competitive for cargo imports and exports.
3. Initiation of the ECHO project was reviewed. The Port would start our part in 2027; the ACE will begin their portion in 2028.
4. The partnership with the Puyallup Tribe of Indians is appreciated by the Commission.

**VOTE: Motion Carried 5-0**

Commissioner Ang	Aye
Commissioner Keller	Aye
Commissioner Marzano	Aye
Commissioner McCarthy	Aye
Commissioner Meyer	Aye

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**8. SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS: None**

**9. NEW BUSINESS: None**

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**10. COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

- A. Audit Committee Report:** Commissioner Meyer reviewed the recent Audit Committee Meeting. The Port received all clean audits. There was a financial audit and a compliance audit. Both Moss Adams and the State Auditor's Office staff were very complimentary of Port staff and the partnership with management.
- B. Bylaws Review Committee:** Heather Burgess, the Port's legal counsel, summarized the work the Bylaws Review Committee has done since the beginning of the year. However, commissioners prefer to have this discussion when all five commissioners are in person. This was tabled to the June Commission meeting.

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**11. ANNOUNCEMENTS / COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:**

- A. Commissioner Keller:** April and May were busy travel months. Commissioner Keller attended the Workforce Boards Conference, the Tacoma Pierce County Chamber's Washington-to-Washington legislative trip and the WPPA Spring Meeting in Spokane. The topics of great concern during all three of these trips were state and federal funding and tariffs. It is difficult to know if we are going to have federal funding for our projects.
- B. Commissioner McCarthy:** This has been a busy two months on tariffs and trade. There is a lot of community and media interest and ports have been at the forefront of that discussion. Commissioner McCarthy has met with customers of The Northwest Seaport Alliance regarding the important issues affecting ports.
- C. Commissioner Meyer:** He had the pleasure of going to Chowdown last week, which was hosted by the Propeller Club. This is always a great event. Commissioner Meyer was reminded that as he looks at the Foss Waterway master plan, the Tacoma Propeller Club is still looking for a home for Chowdown. He would also like to request an update on our budget process. He stated that he needs to be brought up to speed on our HMT and funding of our five-year Capital Improvement Plan. "Big decisions will need to be made and we would like an update", stated Commissioner Meyer.

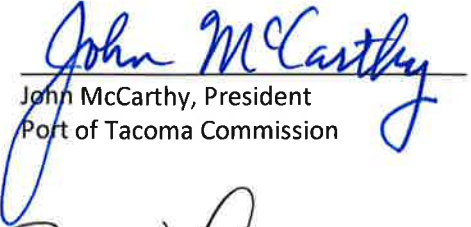
*\*At 2:00 p.m. Commissioner Ang virtually left the meeting.*


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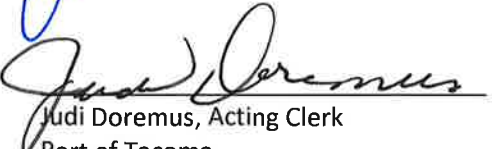
**12. ADJOURNMENT:** Commissioner McCarthy adjourned the meeting at 2:09 p.m.

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ATTEST:

  
John McCarthy, President  
Port of Tacoma Commission

  
Don Meyer, Secretary  
Port of Tacoma Commission

  
Judi Doremus, Acting Clerk  
Port of Tacoma