

# COMMISSION AGENDA

Item No: 5B  
Meeting: 10/20/22

**DATE:** October 3, 2022  
**TO:** Port Commission  
**FROM:** Eric Johnson, Executive Director  
Sponsor: Commissioner Deanna Keller  
**SUBJECT:** Resolution 2022-19-PT Regarding Homelessness

## A. ACTION REQUESTED

Adopt Resolution 2022-19-PT, directing the Executive Director to prepare and present to the Commission alternatives to assist local governments in responding to the growing number of individuals in Tacoma and Pierce County experiencing homelessness.

## B. BACKGROUND

Tacoma and Pierce County has a growing population of individuals who are experiencing homelessness. Unfortunately, the supply of shelter space, temporary and/or permanent supportive housing in Tacoma and Pierce County is inadequate to meet the demand. As a result, the number and size of unsanctioned encampments throughout the city, county, and on industrial lands in the Tacoma Tidelands has been increasing.

Conditions in unsanctioned encampments are dangerous to the inhabitants' health and safety, especially those encampments that are not in close proximity to services, sanitation facilities and other human health and safety needs.

Regional and local policy identify residential and temporary housing as incompatible uses of industrial lands that should be prohibited. This includes the Puget Sound Regional Council's VISION 2050 / Manufacturing Industrial Center polices, the Growth Management Act Container Port Element requirement (RCW 36.70A.085), and the Shoreline Management Act use preferences for water-dependent industrial uses, such as the Port's marine terminal facilities. Moreover, in 2016, The Northwest Seaport Alliance, of which the Port of Tacoma is a Managing Member, adopted Guiding Principles related to maritime and industrial lands, including the need to minimize incompatible uses, including residential. Additionally, the Port of Tacoma Commission in 2021 adopted a five-year Strategic Plan that includes a strategy calling on the Port to develop and support land use and infrastructure policies that protect the cargo supply chain and promote a robust employment base.

RCW 53.08.245 authorizes port districts to engage in economic development programs. Under RCW 53.08.080, the Port of Tacoma may lease its real and personal property "for such purposes and upon such terms as the Port Commission deems proper".

### **C. SCOPE**

1. Adopt findings of the Port Commission.
2. The Port Commission concludes:
  - a. The number of unsanctioned encampments in Tacoma is growing, posing an increasing risk to the health and safety of encampment residents
  - b. The Port wishes to support local governments addressing issues surrounding homelessness in our community, within the confines of the Port's limited statutory authority as a special purpose district.
  - c. Residential uses, whether permanent or temporary, are incompatible with industrial lands zoning and inconsistent with applicable law, codes, and policies.
3. Direct the Executive Director to prepare and present to the Port Commission alternatives by which the Port, within the scope of its authority as a special purpose district, could provide support other local governments to help address the issues of unhoused individuals consistent with the Commission findings.

### **D. FINANCIAL SUMMARY**

There is no cost associated with the adoption of this resolution. However, the alternatives brought forward by the Executive Director to the Commission will likely have costs associated with them.

**E. ECONOMIC INVESTMENT / JOB CREATION:** Unknown

**F. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS / REVIEW:** Unknown.

### **G. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS**

1. **No Action:** Under the no action alternative, the Port would likely see the continued growth of unsanctioned homeless encampments, especially on the Tacoma Tideflats. It would likely also experience growing political pressure for the Port to act given the struggles other jurisdictions (the county, cities, school districts and park districts) are experiencing.
2. **Make Port-owned industrial lands available for sanctioned encampments:** Under this alternative, the Port could make industrial lands available for sanctioned encampments. However, this would expose individuals to truck traffic and a variety of environmental threats. It would also leave individuals isolated from needed services due to the absence of transit service. Overall, it would also create conflicts with a variety of regional and local land use policies.

### **H. NEXT STEPS**

Pending approval of Resolution 2022-19-PT, the Executive Director would develop alternatives by which the Port, within the scope of its authority as a special purpose district, could provide support to other local governments to help address the issues of unhoused individuals consistent with the Commission findings. These alternatives would be presented to the Commission at a future meeting for its consideration.