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Port seeks \$34 million for Port Dock 7 rebuild

(NEWPORT, Ore.) With cost estimates exceeding \$34 million, the replacement of Port Dock 7 will come before federal and state granting agencies following action at the Feb. 27 Port of Newport Commission meeting.

Executive Director Paula Miranda asked for and received the go-ahead from commissioners to submit two grant applications. The larger request of \$25 million will be made to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant program. The port is seeking the smaller yet still substantial amount of \$9.5 million from the Oregon Department of Transportation's Connect Oregon program.

Acknowledging that these are big grant requests, Miranda told commissioners that these will be the first of what is likely to be multiple applications until funding is found.

"This is a big project for us and for Oregon in general, so we're just going to go for it," she said. The director said competition is likely to be fierce for the RAISE funds but the project is competitive enough to make application a worthwhile effort.

"There are a fair amount of infrastructure grants available this year. We are going to keep on trying because, as you can see, this is a huge amount of money," Miranda noted.

The exact figure, \$34,557,110, was estimated by DOWL, a professional services and engineering firm hired for planning and permitting the project since late 2022. Dowl's estimate includes replacement, upland improvements, hoist dock replacement, and utility service. It also includes replacement of the South Beach public fishing pier, which would provide the required mitigation for the commercial marina project.

As with project estimates for any project of this size, there are always uncertainties that could drive costs upward, but these are considered the best estimates today.

"This is a big enough project that we will get a lot of attention, not only from the state, but from the federal side as well," the executive director said.

Port officials regularly discuss the need for funding with agencies and legislators because of the importance of the project. Port Dock 7 is comprised of 119 slips, but its declining condition has required the port to restrict it to 60 vessels, most of which represent small businesses that provided employment to area residents.

In late 2021, engineers from HDR Inc. inspected the dock and advised port officials that the structure built in 1971 would need replacement within five years.

"They said it is the end of the life of this dock and we need to do something to replace it," Miranda said. Even though the port has invested in measures to shore up some of this failing infrastructure, the organization has also had to restrict moorage to smaller vessels and take other steps to slow its decline.

Even if successful in their grant applications, port officials fully expect to also utilize general fund money and loans to achieve this major infrastructure rebuild.

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