



600 S.E. BAY BOULEVARD NEWPORT, OREGON 97365 PHONE (541) 265-7758 FAX (541) 265-4235 www.portofnewport.com

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CONTACT: Paula Miranda

(541) 265-7758

Grant funds will help with Port projects

A temporary pause on a Port of Newport project happened for the very best of reasons, as Port Commissioners learned at their monthly meeting on Tuesday night.

Commissioners had given General Manager Paula Miranda the go-ahead at the end of February to proceed with a structural evaluation of the Rogue Seawall at a price tag of \$58,500. The project would be partially underwritten by a \$12,900 grant from the Lincoln County Community and Economic Development Fund, with the Port on the hook for the balance. Miranda had one other funding opportunity in mind and reported the outcome of those efforts to commissioners this week.

“We have been awarded another grant in the amount of \$43,875 for the Rogue Seawall Engineering Inspection by Business Oregon,” the GM reported. Thanks to the additional grant, the Port is now responsible for only \$1,725 of the total cost.

The 540-foot seawall that supports the Rogue Brewery is more than 40 years old and, out of an abundance of caution, has led Port officials in recent years to discourage the brewery from placing additional heavy equipment near the water side of the building until a more thorough evaluation can be performed.

PBS Engineering will assess the seawall’s stability and outline any needed repairs and the available options. That evaluation is now expected to begin the first week of May.

Another grant opportunity is also looking promising, but officials are still awaiting final word. Travel Oregon welcomed applications for grants in March as part of the state’s COVID-19 recovery efforts.

“Travel Oregon believes improved infrastructure is needed to enhance and expand the visitor experience over both the short and long-term and that these enhancements can help in economic recovery efforts,” the organization explains on its website.

Miranda told Port Commissioners she is optimistic about the port’s application to assist in the cost of installing two fillet tables on the South Beach campus. Current fillet tables can be crowded during peak season. The grant application seeks \$100,000 in support from Travel Oregon, leaving the Port to cover the remaining \$30,000 needed to complete the project.

In budget discussions earlier this year, commissioners had inquired about the costly nature of fillet tables.

“The table itself is expensive to begin with,” explained Director of Operations Aaron Bretz. “It’s made of stainless steel and is a sizeable structure. It also gets plumbed, has electrical power to it, and usually we have to excavate the concrete in the location, tie into sewer and power. It’s a bit of a project,” he added.

With a growing charter fishing fleet based at the South Beach marina and a robust business of recreational users, additional fillet space will be a plus to the operation. If the port receives the grant, the work must be completed by November.

Other maintenance projects received the go-ahead at Tuesday’s meeting, including the painting of facilities at South Beach, including the marina store, maintenance building, and south restrooms.

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Commissioners also gave the nod to some asphalt work at the International Terminal that will increase storage space by 19,000 square feet, allowing for forklift use where it was previously not possible.

Port officials also gave Miranda the nod to continue forward on efforts to determine whether the construction of a new port administration building is feasible. After Tuesday's discussion, architects will continue to finalize documents and prepare for a construction bid process that is anticipated to occur in late summer. Those bids should provide clarity on what the actual costs of the new building would be and whether the Port can proceed with the project.

A colorful discussion of a new paint job on the Rogue Brewery roof was ultimately tabled for one month. Rogue had submitted ideas to the Port for the painting of the roof to include their logo. One of the options included a bright red finish, prompting a bit of hesitation from commissioners. Staff members will review the request, confer with the City of Newport, and return to the Port Commission next month with an update.

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