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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 21, 2023

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Port Commission talks dock and RV park improvements

New pilings to reinforce Port Dock 7, expert advice on enhancing the RV park, and approval of a new tenant all came before the Port of Newport Commission at their last regular meeting of 2023.

Deteriorating after years of heavy wear and brutal weather, officials said interim improvements are necessary to keep Port Dock 7 operational while they continue planning for complete replacement.

"This is the project that is on our list to hold Port Dock 7 together until we get it replaced," said Aaron Bretz, director of operations. The project entails the replacement of 15 pilings. Possibly the greatest hurdle for most Port projects, the necessary permits, have already been obtained.

Executive Director Paula Miranda explained that consultants are currently working on the concept plans needed for granting opportunities for the complete replacement – a project anticipated to take a few years and many millions of dollars.

Port Commissioners unanimously approved the recommendation to contract with Bergerson Construction at a cost of \$185,000 to drive the pilings.

Commissioners also heard a presentation on possible changes to the port's assets on the other side of Yaquina Bay. Good Works Architects (GWA) assembled a team of experts who spent several months completing a market analysis and conceptual redesign of the RV Park Annex, currently located across SE Marine Science Drive from the rest of the campground.

When recommending the review back in July, Miranda described the Annex infrastructure as failing and in need of updating. Modernizing and enhancing port facilities is part of the organization's strategic plan. The consulting team was also authorized to look at other potential locations for enhancement as part of the project, including a dry camp area near the NOAA campus.

Mark Kuykendall, of GWA, said the dry camp area became the unanimous favorite among their team of consultants for future enhancement for a number of reasons.

"First and foremost, everyone agrees that it is a better site in terms of marketability and user experience. It has several logistical advantages, too. It is contiguous with the recreational campus, with the main RV park, boat ramp, and marina," he explained. "It is a blank slate in terms of infrastructure and utilities, where on the current (Annex) site, we are dealing with 1970s infrastructure that is failing. It is a hodge podge of water, electrical, and waste lines that have been pieced together over time," the architect added.

With a lengthy market analysis report in hand, commissioners considered the number of spaces, potential revenues, impacts on current users near the dry camp area, and general cost and logistics of a move.

Bretz voiced his support for the recommendation, saying "there is a need for this in the marketplace right now. It is a reshuffling of where things are over there, but it makes it (the Annex) more centrally located. It's definitely a step up from what we have and adds to our capabilities at the park."

Cost-wise, the process of getting construction documents, permitting, engineering, and landscape design for the new site would be around \$175,000, which is only \$6,000 more than what those same items would cost if renovating the existing Annex. The number of sites, however, would grow from 36 currently to 47 if the new space is chosen.

No decision was made at the meeting, but Miranda will focus on funding opportunities to take the next step in enhancing the RV park.



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In other business, commissioners also approved a rental agreement with TCB Security to occupy additional office space within the port's new administration building. The company, which provides security to the port, will use the space as its headquarters.

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