

**PORT OF NEWPORT**  
**COMMERCIAL FISHING USERS GROUP COMMITTEE MINUTES**

April 18, 2025

Port of Newport Admin Building, 600 SE Bay Blvd, Newport

*This is not an exact transcript. The video of the meeting is available on the Port's website.*

**CALL TO ORDER**

Committee Chair Heather Mann called the Commercial Fishing Users Group Committee Meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Committee Members Present: John Moody (Pos. #3); Bob Eder (Pos. #9); Heather Mann (Pos. #5); Gary Ripka (Pos. #6); Dean Fleck (Pos. #10); Cari Brandburg (Pos. #4); Corey Rock (Pos. #7); and Jim Seavers (Pos. #11).

Alternates Present: Bob Kemp (Alt. #8); and Mark Cooper (Alt. #5).

Committee Members Absent: Clint Funderburg (Pos. #1); Doug Ison (Alt. #11); John Wagner (Alt. #6); Mike Retherford Sr. (Alt. #2); Mike Pettis (Pos. #2); Roy Hale (Pos. #8); and John Holt (Alt. #7).

Port Commission Liaisons: Jeff Lackey

Presenters and Staff: Paula Miranda, Executive Director; Aaron Bretz, Director of Operations/Deputy Executive Director; Don Moon, NIT Facility Manager; Doug Williams, NIT Maintenance; and Kelly Janes, Senior Planner at the US Army Corps of Engineers, who attended remotely.

Members of the Public and Media: Justin Johnson, Robert Smith, Fred Yeck Jr., Kelley Retherford, and Angela Nebel, Summit PR Representative.

**MEMBERSHIP ROSTER**

Members of the Committee and Port staff introduced themselves.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

MOTION was made by Ripka, seconded by Seavers, to approve the minutes of September 12, 2024. The motion carried unanimously in a voice vote.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**Commercial Marina Channel Project Update.** Bretz reported the purpose of the presentation is to remind people of the project. He stated Kelly Janes, Senior Planner at

the Corps, has been leading this effort. He explained it complements the Port project to rebuild Port Dock 7. He noted the channel project opens access to the Port Dock 7 area to larger vessels and maintains that perpetually. He indicated the Port project is the Port Dock 7 Rebuild Project.

Janes presented the report included in the packet. Ripka asked if they had determined how much eelgrass would have to be removed. Janes replied it was about 2 acres that would have to be permanently removed. She explained an ecological model helped them determine how much eelgrass to plant or enhance to mitigate. Ripka confirmed with Janes the Corps has to mitigate for that. He asked if they figured out where to plant it. Janes replied she has a slide on the area recommended for planting.

Mann asked where the information on the industry came from. Janes replied their economist did a survey with the Port of Newport and local fishermen and then did an industry analysis. Mann asked if the survey and analysis are available. Janes replied an economic appendix will be in the report, which will be available shortly for public review. Mann asked if Janes sees any changes coming to the requirements around eelgrass under the current administration. Janes replied she does not. She explained eelgrass is listed as essential fish habitat, which requires mitigation by law. She added unless that law changes, they still need to mitigate for those changes.

Bretz asked if vessels larger than the design vessel could fit. Mann confirmed with staff this design vessel is for the access not the dock slips. Rock asked what the draft would be. Janes replied it would be a 15 ft draft.

Ripka asked if all these calculations are made at mean low water. Janes replied all are at mean lower, low water. Bretz explained the standard. Rock asked what is the depth now. Janes replied 5 to 10 feet. She stated Port Dock 5 has depths as low as 20 feet. She added Port Dock 7 is 10 to 15 feet. Mann confirmed with staff the slides are available in color.

Eder stated unless the mudstone really degrades, if rock gets dumped on those offshore sites, [it will impact] crab gear there. He noted right now the bottom is suitable for crab, and if they put a bunch of rock there, they would be eliminating crab grounds. He suggested upland disposal. Bretz replied the Port has several options. He added there are three different scenarios in addition to offshore. Janes noted if it went offshore, they would layer mudstone with sandy material on top.

Ripka asked why they use those areas since they are Port Dock 7 crab grounds. Janes replied the Ocean Deep Material Disposal Sites are permitted by the EPA, and they are used regularly for that purpose. Brandburg confirmed with Janes sand would be placed at sea. Mann asked if the project disturbs two acres [of eelgrass], they must replace two acres. Janes replied there is no clear requirement. She stated their biologist looked at literature about the success rates for other restoration projects along Oregon and California coasts, and the success rate was between 50-60 percent. She explained the biologist then used a model out of Long Beach, California, and modified it based on parameters of the Oregon coast and project area.

Mann asked how does mitigation impact useability of the area. Janes replied it is off limits for a certain amount of time, and the Port would protect that area for mitigation for the life of the project, 50 years. She added she knows one area is a clamming bed area, and they recommended signage to ask folks to stay away from the eelgrass

mitigation area. Bretz reported state planning laws determine what the Port can do within these areas, and eelgrass mitigation is a highest use for the Port in terms of value.

Mann suggested a more in-depth presentation once the report is finished. Janes replied that is fine as long as the presentation is open to the public. She noted there will be a website for project updates during the public review period. Ripka asked if there are any preliminary cost figures. Janes replied those will be in the report. Rock asked why the north dump site is used in the summertime because it blows back into the channel. Janes replied she will ask the sediment management team and get back to the group on that. Mann recommended this committee meet during the public comment period. She added CFUG can provide written public comment to the Corps.

Lackey asked at what point in the schedule would the Port evaluate Port Dock 7 slips. Bretz replied at 30 percent engineering level or more. Miranda noted that information would be provided by DOWL Engineering. Moody noted the outfall line is used quite a bit, and it is good to get ahead of that with timing. Janes replied they will make sure to coordinate with Pacific Seafood.

**2025-26 Rates, Fees, and Charges**. Miranda reported there is a lot of anxiety and excitement whenever the Port has to increase fees. She stated she understands there is an impact, especially on fishermen, because times have been hard for everyone. She noted on the Port's end, she wants folks to understand times are hard on the Port as well. She indicated as fishermen have seen increases on all sides, the Port has seen increases on all sides. She added she was touring Puget Sound ports, and the folks in Washington, even the small ports, get an average of \$2 to \$3 million in taxes.

Miranda reported the Port of Newport got \$125,000 last year, and \$130,000 is projected this year. She noted the Port's garbage is more than that. She stated what that means is the Port very much relies on rates and grants. She indicated grants have been hard; there is a lot of uncertainty right now. She added folks complain on a regular basis about not fixing this or that, and the docks have gone through a long period of no attention because there was no funding.

Miranda reported even with grants; rates are still a very important component. She stated last year was a rough time, and the Port cut down any increase with the intent to eventually catch up. She explained CPI affects a lot of consumer goods, but the Port is in the maritime industry, almost the same as bridges and roads, and that goes up way higher than CPI. She noted if the Port doesn't keep up, the Port will fall more and more behind, and maintenance will fall even more behind. She indicated staff looked at CPI and took into consideration areas that have been affected higher than the typical CPI. She noted the Port has been discounting certain long-term moorage by 76 percent, and that needs to be addressed. She indicated staff increased it by very little. She added the other area looked at was dredging.

Miranda reported for NOAA dredging in 2017, the Port paid \$350,000, and last year the Port paid \$1.2 million. She stated for Port Dock 7, the Port had to do sediment sampling and that cost \$1.2 million, and without it the Port can't redo Port Dock 7. She noted the Port used to pay \$3,000 for pilings, and now they cost \$15-\$18,000. She explained matches for grants. She indicated Brown put together a lot of information, which includes comparing it to other ports. She added the Port tries not to be the most expensive port, and the Port wants to help the fishing industry.

Miranda reported the Port is working with Pacific Seafood to help them stay here. She noted there are many ways the Port works with [commercial fishing], but there is only so much the Port can subsidize. She added she is open for questions, comments, and suggestions.

Mann stated it's going to be a lot harder on the Port as fishing businesses go out of business. She noted there has to be some kind of a balance. She indicated she had concerns with the comparison with other ports. She stated she did research on that. She noted she looked at Westport, Ilwaco, Seattle, and the moorage here is more expensive than at fishermen's terminal in Seattle. She indicated she appreciates the percent change column, but it stopped short of the International Terminal. She asked why. Miranda replied, unfortunately, Brown provided this and then left the next day, so staff had very little time to change it.

Mann stated she has a really hard time looking at raising fees at the same time the Port is looking to spend \$600,000 on equipment with no customer at the Terminal because [fishermen] will have to pay for the equipment too. She stated she doesn't think that's smart from a fiscal perspective. She explained the equipment is log loading equipment.

Brandburg asked where did the Port pull the \$1.2 million for sediment sampling from. Miranda replied the Port has contingency and shuffles projects. Brandburg asked even though this is a 3 percent increase, some of the businesses are looking at 30 percent or more decreases in this past year. She stated, especially small boats, these hit people hard. She indicated little things like this can make the difference between people being able to fish. She added there are little buyers at the Port, and there are more fees than before like truck axle costs, and that all adds up. She explained it makes it hard for them to continue, and makes her wonder are they going to continue, and what will she do if they don't.

Brandburg stated as a lease holder looking at increases, she used to have water and things like that included. She noted her water has been miscalculated multiple times at thousands of dollars. She added she is still not sure what her water bill is supposed to look like. She requested only a pass through of city costs as a lease holder. Discussion continued on water use and cost.

Brandburg stated there is now a license fee of \$500 for dock sales. She stated she didn't know that had been enacted. She indicated she feels like that is a steep fee for someone to try to sell their fish in this economy, when sometimes there is no market for fish. She noted sometimes a last resort is to buy a license and sell off the dock, and she would hate for that to be \$500. She indicated the fees for charter businesses [are high]. She added they have a lot of competition, and the fillet fee significantly increased.

Brandburg stated those filleters don't make a lot of money, and if they don't have filleters, the charters can't be successful. She explained \$200 is already hard for someone to pay, and going above \$300 is unreasonable. Miranda replied whenever there is a permit, the Port has to manage that permit. She stated people have no idea how much time staff takes managing permits. She indicated \$200 doesn't pay for any time spent. She added \$500 is very reasonable for most people that have that type of permit.

Mann stated now might be a good time to take into consideration the landscape that has not been taken into consideration at all, what is happening federally. She noted [fishermen] have lost hundreds of employees at the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). She explained they are gutting and cancelling surveys, and NMFS employees

are doing janitorial work. She indicated [fishermen] are in a situation where they may not be able to fish period in federal fisheries. She explained federal fisheries need surveys, robust stock assessments, and employees who can manage the regulations. She stated all those things are in flux. She indicated [without federal fisheries], there will not be a Port. She added to put this [increase] on top of what people are struggling with is unmanageable.

Mann stated buying \$600,000 worth of equipment seems unreasonable at this time. She noted there needs to be a balance, and they need Moon to be able to work and have the resources he needs. She indicated every port is subsidized, there is no port that stands alone, and every port has to get grants to stay afloat. She added they need to figure out how to work together.

Mann asked, thinking about the city putting everything on the Port, why can't the Port and seafood industry meet with the city and county and have a collaborative approach to protect the seafood industry in Newport. She stated without federal fisheries, [Newport] is not going to have seafood processors because they can't stay in business only processing pulse fisheries. She indicated if [fishermen] pay more to the Port, they pay less to places like Englund Marine. She added passing on costs to fishermen simply because they are passed onto the Port doesn't work. She emphasized that some families can weather it; a lot of families can't.

Mann stated it feels tone deaf to hear reasonable cost. Miranda replied she understands [fishermen] have costs and things are difficult. She stated as someone who has to manage the Port, she looks overall at how to stay in business and continue to help [fishermen]. She noted before she came on board, the Port was not maintaining many things. She indicated when she looks back at the stuff not maintained, it was crazy. She explained the Port is trying its best to get things done. She added the Port can keep going back and defer the tariffs, like last year, but where will the Port find the funds to continue operating.

Miranda stated [as far as] buying the equipment, part of the Port's strategic plan is to diversify the port. She noted the Port loves having the fisheries and wants to continue having the fisheries. She explained the Port also has an obligation to the taxpayers to do other things. She indicated the Port has a bond that requires bringing cargo and other opportunities. She added the Port is not going to kick anyone out of NIT, it just means the Port is trying to diversify business.

Miranda reported the Port had people knocking on its doors and had to turn them away because the Port didn't have the equipment. She stated the opportunity came where the federal government is paying 80 percent of that cost, including improving 9 acres. She noted the Port does not have a customer around the corner, not yet. She explained Newport only has a couple different natural resources, one is seafood and the other is timber. She indicated the Port has to try to tap into those two opportunities. She added the Port never wants to send fishermen away. She emphasized as manager of the Port, she has to be able to diversify, maintain docks, and make things safe. She stated the Port can keep cutting down the tariffs, but the Port will be cutting down a lot of services as well.

Brandburg stated she appreciates all the work Miranda, Bretz, and staff have done. She noted [fishermen] have seen huge changes to the Port, and she thinks Miranda has tried to balance commercial fishing with cargo really well. She indicated Mann's point was

well said. She asked how [fishermen] help can get more funding and grants; how can the fishing community address these deficits rather than raising fees. She added these increases are not going to pencil out to the big numbers that the Port needs. She noted these are going to make an impact on [fishermen], but will they make an impact on the big picture, probably not.

Brandburg suggested eliminating the filleter permit. She stated if the permit is costing more than it takes to monitor, the permit is not worth it. She suggested having the city enforce its business licenses. Miranda replied the reason the Port has a permit is because there were a lot of issues. She explained people were taking over the tables and wouldn't allow others to use them. She stated the Port created the permit to better manage the tables and be more organized.

Kemp asked if this discussion could be continued. He stated he will meet with Bretz separately. Ripka asked what the work barge is. Bretz replied it is a not very often used work platform, so that people can work alongside their boat. Bretz stated when it comes to grants, the way to get grants is through planning. He explained if you don't do the planning and don't spend money on the planning, you will not compete for the grants. He noted 30 percent engineering is required for the Port Dock 7 project, which costs \$430,000. He added it may be easy to put together a grant package, but it has to be planned. He explained the piece the Port is missing is planning money. He indicated he hears from people, the Port is not doing anything. He added the Port is spending a lot of dollars on planning, but there is no return on that until a facility is built.

Mann stated the Port only comes to her when it needs a letter of support or public comment, and it never comes for planning help. She suggested she could raise \$100,000. She noted some of [the committee] know important people who can help. She emphasized the need to collaborate more.

Mann asked why it is a priority to get cargo now. She noted last year she asked for research on where the bond measure dollars went. She stated right now, the Port might not have a fishing industry, and this Port and community will not survive with just shipping. Miranda replied the Port is obligated by the Legislature to have a strategic plan. She explained every year [Commission] goes over the goals and objectives in the strategic plan, what has been done, what needs to be done, what is a priority, and what is no longer a priority. She noted that part of goals and objectives is capital improvements, which prioritizes all the Port projects. She added there is a lot of shuffling [of projects] to take advantage of what grants are available today.

Mann stated there needs to be a way to be more nimble and responsive to what is happening in the world, not every five years or every year. She suggested legislators would be responsive. She noted groups need to work together for the benefit of the community, and being stuck in rigid ways of doing things doesn't work today. Miranda stated she has access to the state and federal legislators, and she has delivered the same messages Mann is telling her. She indicated that is not a fair characterization of the Port. She added staff work very hard with Commissioners to be as flexible as possible when addressing issues. Mann confirmed with Miranda she is aware of the topics Mann brought up during the meeting.

Ripka stated he doesn't think [the fees] are going to make the Port very much money. He noted [fishermen] are looking at being hit everywhere. He explained shrimp

and bottom fish prices are compared to 1980. He indicated insurance bills have gone up. He added fishing is barely getting by. He emphasized now is not the time.

Fleck noted [Englund] does a lot of importing. He stated all safety supplies come from China. He explained \$3,200 was the cost for a small raft, and it is going up to \$6,000. He indicated he has never seen anything like it in his career. He added they have chosen to not jack prices up and hold.

Mann asked what if CFUG made an appeal to Commission to not raise rates for a year, and over the next year, the CFUG work with the Port in identifying other funding sources. Ripka added fishermen will see where things shake out in a year. Mann stated this would put the onus on the industry in Newport to work to identify opportunities to help the Port. She added this Committee needs to make a report to the Commission.

Miranda stated it is up to the Commission. She explained staff put together what they see the Port needs to keep the Port moving and continue the status quo. She noted at the end of the day, staff come to the Commission with what it needs to get things moving. She indicated she gets it; this is affecting this group. She added the Port can try to subsidize some areas, but some things may not get done. She stated the Port is not being unreasonable on its end on how much time and money it spends on these areas. She noted the Port held off last year, so it will be two years in a row.

Mann asked if there is an estimate of what these increases will generate for the Port. Miranda replied Brown has done work on that, but it's not included in the packet. She added in general, deferring increases will impact Port operations rather than add up to a bunch of revenue

Retherford stated there are five Commissioners, and they can't talk to one another outside of a meeting. She noted when these things are being delt with, she has the voice for the fishing industry. She indicated she wrote a letter to Brown to address these issues. She added she understands the Port side of it.

Retherford stated everything has increased, and staff are trying to minimize increases without going backwards. She noted one place can't take the blunt of it all. She indicated as a member of the industry and Commissioner; she has to balance that too. She added it's a big responsibility, and it's hard. She explained the Port is trying to get Port Dock 7 for the industry, and planning is important. She stated the Port can't stop the planning because prices have gotten so bad, or there will never be a Port Dock 7.

Retherford noted she hears the [Committee]. She stated she supports and pushes these issues they are having as a fishing industry. She indicated collaboration is important. She added it is time for budgeting, and no one wants rates raised. She emphasized the question is how do we all succeed.

Retherford stated Miranda has fought on behalf of the Port and community. She asked should Commissioners make a mistake and take chances. She noted the Port has to find revenue somewhere, and [fishermen] keep asking that no fees go up. She emphasized she loves the commercial fishing industry, and she has fought for them all her life. She noted to make decisions for them is not easy, and she wants the fishing industry to succeed. She explained there are three other Commissioners who have different hopes and dreams for the Port, and they are all protecting it together in different ways.

Retherford stated everyone needs to remember we are on the same team. She noted she doesn't want to raise people's rates. She explained the Commission needs to

be careful on how it does this, because it will play out in the future. Ripka stated for small boat members, there was no salmon season and increases to costs for rope. He noted the Port needs to have the small fleet for the future of the fleet, for guys coming in. He emphasized these rates are really going to hit the small fishermen, another nail in coffin.

Mann stated she doesn't think there is a good understanding of the work the Port is doing. She noted all the costs are coming down to fishermen in the end. She indicated she works for a group of very successful fishermen, and when her members are worried about the future, she is worried. She stated this is an unprecedented time for all of us. She indicated she understands the Port has obligations beyond fishing, but if the Port doesn't protect the customer it has to the best of its ability, then complimenting that won't matter. She added what commercial fishing brings to the Port and community is more than what shipping would bring.

Moody stated he would volunteer people to assist with funding opportunities. Bretz stated when someone brings an opportunity to pursue, he thinks about bandwidth. He explained Miranda, Brown, and he only have so much they can do. He noted they often run out of time, and don't have the ability to add 12 more grant applications to the work queue and do the contracting and grant compliance. Mann replied that's where collaboration comes in. She stated she has written tons of grants and raised almost a million. She noted a lot of people have that ability, and maybe there are opportunities to partner where industry is doing a lot of heavy lifting. Retherford noted it would be nice to have those names and phone numbers because Mann's schedule can't take on any more. Discussion ensued on feasibility of internships and grant writers.

Johnson stated commercial docks and South Beach have daily, weekly, and monthly rates. He noted with the increase at the International Terminal, he can't find a more expensive place to tie 95 feet. He indicated the Terminal does not offer a weekly or monthly rate, which is offered at the other facilities. He added slips in the commercial marina are not tied two to three deep. He explained at the Terminal boats are stacked two or three deep and charged the same moorage.

Johnson stated back in 2018, [Terminal vessels were charged] \$2,000 a month. He noted there's some days he is looking for crane access, but the rest of the time he is just looking for basic moorage. He emphasized he can't find a more expensive place to tie. He asked why there is no monthly rate at the Terminal.

Bretz stated the Port has a state waterway lease for the use of the pier space. He explained it is a service location, and vessels are supposed to be there for service only. He noted there is no long-term moorage at the Terminal, and the Port can't do that. Miranda replied it is supposed to be a service area, and because the Port has a lack of slips at commercial docks, that became a default place to moor. She added the Port wants to create more space at Port Dock 7 so that if you're not receiving service, you can be here and pay less.

Johnson asked if there will be changes to the west entrance for Port Dock 7, a widening. He explained that is a very tight space, a choke point when only 42 feet wide. Bretz replied the rubble mound breakwater can't be affected any more. He agreed that is a concern for operators. Johnson asked if they looked at the east access. Bretz replied the problem is the utility undercrossing. He explained all the water that goes to South Beach and sewer coming back goes through that line. He stated the Port can't cut that,

and it's just sitting on the bottom, not buried. He added the Port would have a \$30 million project to replace the line.

Yeck Jr. asked staff for clarification on the failure to register fee. Bretz replied [vessels] need to have insurance, a MLA on file, and let staff know they are coming in. He explained that something run into on the commercial side is the transient boats will come in but won't check in and won't give insurance information. Miranda added those boats often won't pay.

Lackey stated with Miranda, Bretz, Brown, and staff, so much has been accomplished. He noted the bandwidth as a small team has been great, like their ability to get grants. He explained it was true 10 years ago, no one can support themselves on user [fees] when there is property over water. He stated 10 years later, everything is so much more expensive and red tape is worse; it's even more impossible. He indicated the Port has to have grants. He added for the \$1.2 million on sediment sampling, the Commission hated to spend money that doesn't build anything, but they have to do it to unlock the \$9 million for dredging.

Lackey stated Port Dock 5 pedestal work is coming along, the RORO Dock work is coming up, and with Rogue Seawall, there was additional costs. He noted Port costs are going up. He explained with rates and fees, everyone is tight. He noted in 2018, moorage was \$46 per foot, now its \$75, and it is looking to go to \$86. He stated that doubled within 10 years. He indicated the Terminal already doubled in five years. He added each time there is an increase, there is more incentive to go to other ports.

Lackey stated at some point there is diminishing returns. He noted the Commission can't run this Port [solely] on fees, everything takes grants. He indicated he looked at what folks around are paying. He explained Coos Bay is a like port, but the other two in the report are not comparable. He stated Astoria, Westport, Ilwaco, and Reedsport are similar, and the Port is pretty high above the similar ports except for Coos Bay. He added the Port is way high for the distant water fleet.

Lackey stated the bond measure included the purpose to keep fleets returning here. He asked where else they were going to go. He noted there could be diminishing returns on higher fees. He added there is more to the Terminal than service and go. Bretz replied in terms of compliance with DSL, the Port provides services to vessels at the Terminal.

Mann asked Bretz if he has some ideas of the top [regulations] to comply with, things the Committee could advocate to eliminate or change. She explained the administration is looking at gutting the Environmental Protection Act, and maybe the Port could take advantage of some of that. Miranda explained the work of PNWA, Business Oregon, and OPPA. She noted she has worked with DSL for 22 years, and that is the hardest state agency to make changes on leases or registrations. Bretz stated he would meet with Mann later to discuss regulations.

Lackey stated everyone is in a difficult spot. He noted he doesn't have a great solution, but he is concerned with diminishing returns. He added the Port is too far above comparable ports. Miranda replied her understanding is that Brown did those comparisons, but staff will look at it again.

Miranda stated the Port supports the fishermen, supports the businesses. She noted the Port doesn't want them to go away. She added it would not be good for the Port

or community, and that has never been its intent. Mann confirmed with staff she could speak on rates and fees during the Commission meeting on Tuesday.

**Future Meeting Schedule**. Discussion ensued on meeting schedules. Tucker confirmed second Tuesdays once a quarter for the CFUG meetings would work the best. Miranda added if the Port needs to add another meeting, the Port can add another meeting.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Having no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

ATTESTED:



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Bob Eder, Vice Chair



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Paula J. Miranda, Executive Director