

# Port Commission selects officers for coming year

It was the official changing of the guard at Tuesday's meeting of the Port of Newport Port Commission, when a new commissioner took the oath of office, a departing commissioner was given great thanks, and a new slate of officers was elected.

The online meeting, visible to the public via a live YouTube link, began with a proper send-off to Sara Skamser, who stepped down from the body in May for personal reasons after serving since 2017, including the past year as Commission President.

One by one, Port Commissioners offered up their praise for Skamser, mentioning both her service to the Port, but also her many contributions to the community. Each shared a personal anecdote or experience they had had with the former president, and in turn, she expressed her satisfaction at the progress made by the Port.

"It is such a pleasure to see where the Port was when I became a commissioner and seeing where it is now," Skamser commented, adding "and it only comes from all of us being so engaged and caring about our community and particularly the Port, of course."

General Manager Paula Miranda spoke of her appreciation for Skamser's guidance in the first year of her tenure at the Port and displayed a plaque that will be presented to the former commissioner once an in-person meeting is possible.

Immediately following Skamser's farewell, the Port Commission welcomed Kelley Retherford to its ranks, following a vote at their May meeting to fill the vacancy. Retherford recited the oath of office and was welcomed by then-Vice President Jim Burke.

Later in the meeting, leadership for the coming year was established, when Burke was nominated to the role of President, Gil Sylvia was nominated as Vice President, and Walter Chuck was nominated to continue his role as secretary/treasurer of the Port Commission. All were approved by unanimous vote.

On the agenda was the annual approval of rates and fees for the various functions around the Port, both commercial and recreational. Most rates increased by four percent, except for commercial marina moorage, was increased by 10 percent. That larger increase was in keeping with an agreement with commercial marina users last year, with funds designated to upgrade some marina utilities.

Two new fees were added to the rate structure. Those who live aboard a vessel in the recreational marina will now have to pay a utility fee to help cover those costs. Additionally, the Port Commission approved a \$3 parking fee at South Beach. Director of Finance Mark Brown explained that it would apply in those situations where someone arrives in a separate vehicle to go out on a boat. While the person launching the boat will have paid launch fees, the extra vehicles have paid nothing until now.

"It is very typical for a facility to charge those fees and will help with the replacement of the blacktop surface when that becomes necessary," he explained, noting that the revenue will be set aside in a separate fund.

The 2020-2021 rates and fees were approved by unanimous vote. The new parking fees will go into effect in July.

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