

County Commissioners Delay Decision on Port Westward Expansion

The Columbia County Board of Commissioners, at their regularly scheduled September 13, 2017 meeting, decided to delay any decision or further deliberations on the controversial expansion at Port Westward and will reopen the record for a newly submitted supplemental staff report. A new deliberation date has been set for October 25 at 10:00 am in St. Helens.

The Port of St. Helens' controversial proposal to rezone 837 acres of farmland for heavy industrial development had previously faced fierce opposition at a hearing before the Board of Commissioners on August 2. Farmers, local business owners, commercial fishermen, retired teachers, and many others delivered passionate testimony to the Board on issues ranging from the value of local farms to the threats from oil-by-rail and other fossil fuel development.

That hearing marked the Port's second attempt to convert high-quality farmland along the Columbia River to industrial development, including oil-by-rail terminals, fracked gas-to-methanol refineries, and fertilizer plants. In 2014, the Land Use Board of Appeals overturned a

nearly identical proposal by the Port.

"Good agriculture jobs are on hold in Columbia County because of the uncertainty polluting industry proposed under the rezone creates for local farms," explained blueberry farm owner James Hoffman. "We need a commitment from the county that we can farm without constant risk to water and food safety." Mr. Hoffman described high crop yields from his farm, located in the same drainage district as the proposed rezone, and his reluctance to invest if the county opens the gates for industrial developments like oil-by-rail.

Reflecting the widespread impacts of fossil fuel development on the Columbia River, the County Commissioners heard testimony from Columbia County residents, citizens from Cowlitz and Clark County, Washington, and Clatsop County, Oregon. The Clatsop County Democrats testified in opposition to the rezone, noting that fossil fuel projects like liquefied natural gas (LNG)—a potential industry at the rezone site—faced fierce opposition for over a decade in neighboring Clatsop County. Local residents defeated both LNG proposals. The Commissioners also received a letter from

the Oregon Department of Agriculture, describing significant concerns about the impacts of industry to neighboring farms, home to some of the most productive soil in Columbia County.

Port Westward is a hub for energy export ventures, including Global Partners, an oil-by-rail trans-shipment facility that operated from 2013 to 2015 before switching to ethanol. The company maintains regulatory approval to resume oil shipments. The site is also the former home to two coal export proposals and the company Northwest Innovation Works holds a lease option to build a fracked gas-to-methanol refinery.

"The fight over farmland in northern Columbia County shows how Big Coal and Big Oil have galvanized communities up and down the Columbia River," stated Dan Serres, Conservation Director for Columbia Riverkeeper. "Fossil fuel companies underestimated people's fierce passion for salmon, safety, and clean water. From commercial fishermen to farmers to parents raising their kids in river communities, dirty industry at the expense of safety and clean water won't fly."

ODFW Commission Adopts 2018 Big Game Regulations

The Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted Big Game Regulations when it met September 15, 2017 in Welches, Oregon.

There are a few changes including shifts in season dates. The Commission updated language to make it clearer that mechanical and moveable blades are not lawful to use for archery hunting.

The Commission declined to expand the prohibition on night vision optics until they further explore the issue.

The Commission also approved funding for several recommended Access and Habitat projects to improve wildlife habitat on private land in Oregon.

The Commission heard updates on several issues including sea lions' impact on Willamette River winter steelhead, sage-grouse conservation efforts, and the Wolf Conservation and Management plan which is in the process of being updated. No action was taken on these issues.

The Commission is the policy-making body for fish and wildlife issues in the state and it typically meets monthly. Its next meeting is October 13 in Prineville.

Special Election November 7, 2017

A Special Election will be held November 7, 2017 for those parts of Columbia County included in the Portland Community College taxing district. Areas of Columbia County NOT included in the election consist of Cities of Clatskanie, Rainier, Prescott and those surrounding rural precincts. Approximately 28,000 registered voters will receive a ballot.

The sole contents of the election will be the referred Measure 26-196 which was filed August 16, 2017 with Multnomah County Elections. Election details including measure text and explanatory statement can be found on the Elections department page of www.co.columbia.or.us.

The main mailing of ballots will be Friday, October 20. Overseas and out-of-state ballots will be mailed at an earlier date.

Returning voted ballots: Ballots must be received by the county clerk no later than 8:00 pm on November 7, 2017 - postmarks do not count. The United States Postal Service has stated that ballots could take up to 5-7 days to reach county elections offices once they are put in the mail. It is advised that if you cannot put your ballot in the mail before November 2, you should plan on returning your ballot to a drop site.

Drop sites for the election will be as follows:

VERNONIA LIBRARY 701 Weed Ave. DURING LIBRARY HOURS. November 7 12:00 pm - 8:00 pm

SCAPPOOSE CITY HALL 33568 E. Columbia Ave. A 24HR DROP BOX IS LOCATED AT THIS ADDRESS. November 7 Closes at 8:00 pm

MIST BIRKENFELD RFPD 12525 Highway 292 DURING OFFICE HOURS. November 7 9:00 am - 8:00 pm

COUNTY COURTHOUSE (ELECTIONS DEPT) 230 Strand Street, St. Helens, OR 97051 A DRIVE-UP DROP BOX IS LOCATED IN THE LOWER PARKING LOT. November 7 Closes at 8:00 pm

Public Certification Test: The Public Certification Test of the counting equipment for the Special Election to be held on Tuesday, November 7, 2017 will be held on Tuesday, October 31, 2017. The testing will begin at 10:00 am in the County Elections Dept. The public is welcome to attend.



reflecting the spirit of our community
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