

Port explores bond for new Life Flight hangar

Project could spur airport development

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The Port of Astoria is moving toward a bond measure in the May election to finance development at the southern end of the Astoria Regional Airport, anchored by a new hangar for Life Flight Network.

The Port Commission voted unanimously Tuesday to

develop a bond measure and to begin permitting and engineering on the project.

Port Executive Director Jim Knight brought in David Albrecht, an expert in the municipal financing arm of the Special Districts Association of Oregon, to explain the hypothetical costs of a bond.

Albrecht said he was given the preliminary assumption of a \$1.8 million, three- to 10-year bond measure going to Clatsop County to voters in the May 16 election. The Port would need to submit ballot measure language to the

county clerk's office by March 16.

If the Port went with a three-year bond, he said, the additional tax burden to county residents would be slightly less than 12 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value. The burden would fall to slightly more than 5 cents per \$1,000 on a seven-year bond, he said, but with more interest. The Port's permanent minimum taxing rate is 12.56 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

Life Flight, which opened its first coastal base in Warrenton last spring, received

\$665,000 in state grants and is investing another \$285,000 to build a new hangar. The Port Commission voted last month to focus on developing the hangar at the south end of the airport, which staff and airport advisers have said would open further development opportunities by connecting to Airport Lane.

The Port has received letters of support for the project from most hospitals and cities around the region, but staff has estimated anywhere between \$650,000 to about \$1 million in additional development costs for the Port. Knight

brought in Willis Van Dusen, the former Astoria mayor, who volunteered to stump for a bond on behalf of the Port.

Van Dusen said that if the bond is less than \$2 million and helps separate Life Flight's helicopters from fixed-wing aircraft, he's all for it, having a daughter who's a surgeon and a mother-in-law who has taken Life Flight to Portland twice.

"I have discussed the item with some different businesses around the county to see what kind of support you would have for a bond measure," Van Dusen said. "At this point, it's been 100 percent support."

Airport Manager Gary Kobes said permitting for the Life Flight project needs to start immediately and will cost the Port about \$40,000. If permitting starts today, he said, construction wouldn't start any earlier than November. Engineering costs are estimated at more than \$180,000, but Kobes said such work could wait until June.

None of the costs for permitting and engineering are budgeted, he said, which presents a risk to the Port. "We'd probably spend \$40,000 to \$50,000 by the time the bond could pass," he said.

Travel ban decision in hands of appeals court judges

Washington state leading the fight

By SUDHIN THANAWALA
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — A federal appeals court will decide whether to reinstate President Donald Trump's travel ban after a contentious hearing in which the judges hammered away at the administration's motivations for the ban, but also directed pointed questions to an attorney for two states trying to overturn it.

It was unclear which way the three judges of the San Francisco-based 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals would rule, though legal experts said the states appeared to have the edge.

"I'm not sure if either side presented a compelling case, but I certainly thought the government's case came across as weaker," said Stephen Vladeck, a professor at the University of Texas School of Law.

A ruling could come as early as today and could be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Trump tweeted early today: "If the U.S. does not win this case as it so obviously should,



Karen Shore holds up a sign outside of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco Tuesday.

AP Photo/Jeff Chiu

we can never have the security and safety to which we are entitled. Politics!"

The appeals court challenged the administration's claim that the ban was motivated by terrorism fears, but it also questioned the argument of an attorney challenging the executive order on grounds that it unconstitutionally targeted Muslims.

The contentious hearing before the judges on the 9th Circuit focused narrowly on whether a restraining order issued by a lower court should remain in effect while a challenge to the ban proceeds. But the judges jumped into the larger constitutional questions surrounding Trump's order, which temporarily suspended the nation's refugee program and immigration from seven mostly Muslim countries that

have raised terrorism concerns.

Huge audience

The hearing Tuesday was conducted by phone — an unusual step — and broadcast live on cable networks, newspaper websites and various social media outlets. It attracted a huge audience, with more than 130,000 alone tuned in to the court's YouTube site to hear audio.

Judge Richard Clifton, a George W. Bush nominee, asked an attorney representing Washington state and Minnesota what evidence he had that the ban was motivated by religion. The two states are suing to invalidate the ban.

"I have trouble understanding why we're supposed to infer religious animus when in fact the vast majority of Muslims would not be affected."

Only 15 percent of the world's Muslims are affected, the judge said, citing his own calculations. He added that the "concern for terrorism from those connected to radical Islamic sects is hard to deny."

Public statements

Noah Purcell, Washington state's solicitor general, cited public statements by Trump calling for a ban on the entry of Muslims to the U.S. He said the states did not have to show every Muslim is harmed, only that the ban was motivated by religious discrimination.

Clifton also went after the government's attorney, asking whether he denied statements by Trump and former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani,

who said recently that Trump asked him to create a plan for a Muslim ban. Judge Michelle T. Friedland, who was appointed by President Barack Obama, asked why the case should not move forward to determine what motivated the ban.

"We're not saying the case shouldn't proceed, but we are saying that it is extraordinary for a court to enjoin the president's national security decision based on some newspaper articles," said August Flentje, who argued the case for the Justice Department.

Under questioning from Clifton, Flentje did not dispute that Trump and Giuliani made the statements.

Clifton said he understood if the government argued that state-

ments by Trump and his advisers should not be given much weight, but he said they are potentially evidence in the case.

Connections to terror

Friedland also asked whether the government has any evidence connecting the seven nations to terrorism.

Flentje told the judges that the case was moving fast and the government had not yet included evidence to support the ban. Flentje cited a number of Somalis in the U.S. who, he said, had been connected to the al-Shabab terrorist group.

The ban has upended travel to the U.S. for more than a week and tested the new administration's use of executive power.

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Erik Knoder
Erik Knoder has lived in Oregon since 1988. He received his master's degree in natural resource economics from Oregon State University in 1999. Aside from labor market economics his research interests include land use, growth and development, and the fishing industry. Erik joined the Oregon Employment Department as a regional economist June of 2003 and works in Newport. He is responsible for generating and disseminating labor market information for Lincoln, Tillamook, Clatsop and Columbia counties.

Josh Lehner
Josh Lehner is an Economist with the Oregon Office of Economic Analysis. He develops the quarterly Oregon Economic forecast, including outlooks for employment, income and housing. Additional responsibilities include forecasting revenues for the Oregon Lottery, Oregon Judicial Department and state tobacco taxes.

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