

OPINION



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Selling off assets won't sustain Port

Current management at the Port of Astoria has suggested selling off taxpayer-owned and supported assets. An advisory committee tasked with helping management address port finances has come to a similar conclusion, suggesting what could be insolvency if the Port does not redirect its efforts and address its deficiencies.



BILL COOK

Before selling stakeholder assets — buildings, not the land — the Port should consider what a sale of an asset might look like in the future. Selling to a buyer without stipulating continuity with Port and city future planning efforts is potentially fraught with disappointment later on. Selling of any taxpayer-owned asset should be consistent with what is best for all four corners of the Port district. At a minimum, the sale should be widely advertised in local, regional, and national real estate magazines and related trade publications, both online and in print.

It is unlikely that serious developers are even aware that this port is considering selling publicly owned assets, which is quite rare. So reaching out to the widest audience and vetting potential purchasers against the Port's strategic plan and in cooperation with community interests is a better recipe for success than a first-come, first-sold scenario.

Discussions abound in the community about selling off the former Red Lion complex at the West Mooring Basin and the marina at the East Mooring Basin. In the case of the East Basin, because commitments were made to stakeholders in Clatsop County and our state and national representatives in return for their dedication to help, the Port was able to garner more than \$23



Edward Stratton/The Astorian

The Port of Astoria's West Mooring Basin.

million to restore the breakwater and floats to protect fishing vessels and provide public access to the waterfront. The public access onto the structure is a unique exception and one we as a community need to protect. The loss of that unique access to the Columbia River affects us all, as we are seeing more and more large complex development along the waterfront. Selling of any asset should be aggressively vetted to realize the best possible developer(s) working with us, the communities. This holds true for the Red Lion complex, likely the most visible asset of the public and like East Basin, should be well-considered for what will eventually replace the aging buildings now in place.

I urge you to attend Port meetings and voice your concerns. Insist on public hearings to have this conversation. Ask the commission to move slowly

and cautiously, because once sold, and without prudent input for planning, we live with whatever may come, good or bad.

We continue to hear that deferred maintenance is an anchor dragging the Port down, yet all ports are faced with keeping abreast of what needs fixing and will continue to. Like your house, if the roof leaks, you find the ability and resources to plug the leak or you are faced with watching your house fall. Preventing this type of failure is where a manager enlists competent staff to oversee the organization's assets, and engages a cohesive commission to work with staff, stakeholders and tenants to monitor progress or failure. The Port's strategic plan, adopted in 2010, provides the guidance and framework for annually reviewing the Port's capital assets. And the plan is fluid; by definition it is

a document that requires updates and changes as situations change.

It is difficult to understand how the Port could have gotten into this situation, if the Port had been following their 2010 strategic plan, revisiting it at least yearly and reviewing with stakeholders. Could the problems such as deferred maintenance, loss of revenues and loss of grants have resulted in a less-severe situation? It is essential that a public agency such as the Port engage with its tenants and stakeholders frequently. It is a requirement for funding via Business Oregon, the agency that is positioned to assist the Port when compliant with an approved and updated strategic plan. Public participation and outreach is vital when asking those same stakeholders for more financial assistance.

Selling off assets as a way out won't sustain the agency. Nor will it address the Port's other significant problem, that of management and commissioners working out of the public eye and not communicating with tenants and stakeholders.

Businessdictionary.com defines management as interlocking functions of creating corporate policy and organizing, planning, controlling, and directing an organization's resources in order to achieve the objectives of that policy. For the Port of Astoria to move forward it is essential management and the commission understand that and separate duties. Commissioners set the policy; management carries out same on a day-to-day schedule. If ongoing operations are struggling, actions should be taken immediately and publicly to address the problems. As it is, we are seeing information withheld by management that if shared may have resulted in something positive, not a cry for help.

Bill Cook is a former deputy director of the Port of Astoria.

LETTERS

Dams are killing salmon

To confuse you, dam proponents, including some in Congress, tout the Columbia Basins Snake River dam juvenile salmon survival rate as if it applied accumulatively to the entire waterway.

The Corps of Engineers cites a per-dam survival rate trending toward 95 percent, which may be true, but is deceptively used. Here's why: The anti-salmon crowd fails to tell you that accumulated dam-by-dam losses through all eight dams leaves only 66 percent survival, and doesn't account for losses occurring in the dams' reservoirs.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's report does. In 2018, NOAA reported a Snake River juvenile spring-summer chinook survival rate — from the head of slack water (near Lewiston, Idaho) to the Bonneville Dam's tailrace (the lowest tailrace) — at just 38 percent. NOAA also reported a long-term average of just 49 percent.

However, none of the above rates include "delayed mortality." These losses occur between Bonneville and the ocean, and result from stress and harms juveniles suffer as they pass through the eight-dam and reservoir obstacle course. Researchers estimate delayed mortality losses of 36 to 76 percent.

Therefore, including, as we must, delayed mortality, in 2018 the total Snake River juvenile salmon survival rate ranged between 24 to 9 percent. These figures tell the sad, whole-truth story.

BORG HENDRICKSON
Moscow, Idaho

Hunsinger for Port commission

Who is a Port Commissioner? Do the commissioners realize they are elected by the people, and are there to represent those who pay taxes? If they did, they would realize their director is making poor choices that will affect the port negatively for years to come.

Earth to Port: Your balance sheet is non-sustainable, and where is your strategic plan you have been working on for the past three years? Unreal.

It's sad Commissioner Robert "Steve" Stevens is running unopposed. It would not have been difficult for someone with a small amount of critical thought and inquiry to win; which is in stark contrast to Commissioner Stevens' "let sleeping dogs lie" campaign.

Are you aware the Port is entertaining selling the East Mooring Basin to fund short-term debt? Anyone who wants to sell Port (your) assets to fund short-term debt



is selling you down the river.

The current Port director has been mismanaging the Port for years. Due to fiscal and managerial mismanagement, the Port has lost all credibility at the local, state and federal level. It's inexcusable and embarrassing.

Commissioner Bill Hunsinger is on the right path. I have personally sat down with both Commissioner Hunsinger and Commissioner Stevens within the past few months to inquire about their approach to solving a big problem. Commissioner Hunsinger gets it. Commissioner Stevens' view is myopic, at best.

If you want change and a chance at fixing the Port, vote for Bill Hunsinger, and don't vote for Commissioner Stevens.

GLENN TAGGART
Port Commissioner, 1993-2006
Astoria

Trump doing a great job

In response to the letter to the editor "Time for courage" (The Astorian May 9), I could only add that after two whole years and millions of dollars spent investigating to try and remove a duly elected president of the U.S., the writer simply can't let it go. The left is so obsessed with President Donald Trump — in that they hate him — that they are willing to ignore

the obvious: "No collusion."

Hillary Clinton and her cohorts make a deal with Russia, giving them control of vital weapons-grade uranium, she has hundreds of illegal emails, and no charges are even suggested, and little concern is shown by the leftist press.

Leaders in the FBI, the CIA and other government agencies use their offices and positions of power to try and oust Trump, but the writer and others with similar beliefs conclude that Trump must go because he doesn't fit their ideas of what a president should look like.

Well, he has done what many of us wanted our president to do. He got the economy back on track, he stands up for America on the world scene and he doesn't promote what traditional Americans consider as evil.

Say what you like, hate him if you must, but be aware that millions of Americans feel that he is doing a great job and are going to vote for him again.

CARL YATES
Seaside

Oser for school board

I am voting for David Oser in his quest to continue serving as a valued member of the Astoria School District Board, and I hope that you will consider doing so,

as well.

David Oser's total commitment to our students, their safety and the improvements to our aging facilities was proven to me by his leadership role in the very successful passage of the Astoria School District's bond measure in our last election.

Working with David in this very positive outcome left no doubt in my mind that David is the best candidate for the school board position. His commitment to our kids' education, our facilities, his very strong background in financial management and his tremendous leadership skills give him the ideal tools needed for the Astoria School District to reach their goals.

Please join me in voting for David Oser for the Astoria School Board.

SKIP HAUKE
Astoria

Wisdom out to sea

As I watched the ship traffic on the river, a 600-foot vessel from the Wisdom Line went by. On the side of the ship, in 20-foot high letters: Wisdom.

I thought to myself, "there goes wisdom, out to sea — probably won't be back for a while."

JIM HALLAUX
Astoria