

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY OBSERVER REPORT

Port of Tacoma, Special Meeting
(rescheduled regular meeting of January 16, 2020).
Report by Rosemary Powers

January 13, 2020

Two new members of the Commission, elected in November 2019, were sworn in, Commission officers were elected, and assignments to various internal committees and outside membership organizations were made. The Commission also gave guidance to the Port Executive, Brian Johnson, regarding plans to meet an urgent need for interior and structural maintenance at the current Port Administration Building (One Sitcum Plaza in Tacoma). Since the regular meeting time was changed to this earlier date (even though the change was published more than 72 hours in advance), I was unable to attend in person. I did view the entire meeting online and provide a detailed summary below.

The meeting was called to order at 12:01 pm by acting Commission President John McCarthy, who noted that they had initially convened at 11:00 am, and recessed for an executive session dealing with a litigation issue, at which no votes or actions were taken.

Swearing in of New Commissioners. Following the usual Pledge of Allegiance, McCarthy noted that this was the largest crowd he had seen at a commission meeting since he rejoined the commission two years ago (over 40 people present) and acknowledged that this was a special day with the swearing in of two new commissioners.

(A note about the new commissioners taken from Commission Website. Kristin Ang, raised in Pierce County, is an attorney with background in international and business/trade law. She currently serves as board president of the City Club of Tacoma. Deanna Keller, a native of Washington and long-time Tacoma resident, has a background in public education, military service, and non-profit board service. She is currently CEO/President of Tacoma manufacturing firm Kel-Tech Plastics, Inc., that ships both nationally and internationally. Both were elected for a term to end in December 2023).

As a context for the swearing in, Commissioner McCarthy provided historical background, noting that the commission has been in existence for 101 years, and that these two new members are the 39th and 40th members of the public port commission. While the port operated as a commercial entity from the mid 1800's, it became a public port in 1918, with the first three members being a farmer, a longshore worker, and a board member of a shipping company who was a banker. *(McCarthy did not note the gender of these first commissioners, but, the presence today of two women as new members makes its own historical statement).* McCarthy also acknowledged that the Port exists on the traditional lands of the Coast Salish people, and recognized members of the Puyallup Tribal Council in attendance. The swearing in was conducted by Pierce County Executive Bruce Dammeier and Puyallup Tribal Council Member Anna Bean.

Remarks by the new commissioners provided a glimpse of the priorities they are likely to champion. Ang spoke to the values of respect for treaty rights, and to addressing the history of pollution with the goal of environmentally sustainable practices that also provide good jobs. Keller

stressed the essential and equal importance of the “three legged stool” of economic development, jobs and the environment (air,water,land).

Commission officers for 2020 were elected, with McCarthy becoming President (this office is on a rotation basis, with it being McCarthy’s turn). The Commission also elected Deanna Keller as First Assistant Secretary and Kristen Ang as Second Assistant Secretary (order based on their general election totals). In addition, Audit Committee members were appointed with Dick Marzano continuing as chair and Deanna Keller as vice-chair.

McCarthy noted that the Port Commission has formal relationships with over 20 outside membership groups (to which a maximum of two commission members each are appointed), a number of internal Port committees (such as the Audit Committee) and several committees related to the Northwest Seaport Alliance (on which commissioners must serve). The limit of two members per group relates to the open meetings law, as having three or more members present from the Port would require meeting the requirements of that law. Further, having two members assigned allows for times when one member may have conflict of interest (or appearance of such) or be unavailable. A list of all these groups and the current list of commissioner appointments can be found at the January 13 meeting agenda at <http://portal.veconnect.us/p/portoftacoma/e/7a5857adfd921667a61d27cced0a0432>

Port Administration Offices. Additional business included continued discussion about future work space for the Port Administration, following up on alternatives presented in the December 2019 meeting. Currently, the Port of Tacoma and Northwest SeaPort Alliance executive, commercial/real estate, operations and administrative departments are co-located in the Port of Tacoma Administration Building located at One Sitcum Plaza in Tacoma. This facility was constructed in 1982 and remodeled in 2002. A long-term continuation at the current site would require significant maintenance and renovation—that could cost upwards of \$12 million, including seawall, roof repair, and some essential interior repair (floor coverings especially). The commissioners all preferred a 3-5 year commitment to the current site with essential repairs, with plans for investment in a more appropriate location and concept—whether primarily administrative, or on the order of a major Maritime Center with administrative capacity, or even further something that could involve collaboration with Tribal interests. The commission will address this building need/potential as part of 2020 strategic planning in an iterative process that will bring a variety of options and cost assessments forward for Commission consideration.

Port Executive Report. The Port Executive, Brian Johnson, in his general comments, reported that he had participated in the Government to Government training sponsored by the Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs. A one-day session, it covers a tribal historical perspective, legal issues, tribal sovereignty & tribal government. Johnson said he intends to build on this training to strengthen his own and other Port staff skill in respectfully navigating government to government relationships.

Following additional well-wishing for new Commission Members, the meeting was adjourned shortly after 1:00 pm.