

**League of Women Voters of Tacoma-Pierce Co.
Observer Report**

Name of Agency: Tacoma Port Commission

Date: February 7

Observer Reporting: Rosemary Powers

Length of Meeting: 2:40-3:10 pm

Members Present/Absent: All Port Commissioners were present—Chair Claire Petrich, and commissioners John McCarthy, Don Meyer, Don Johnson, and Richard Marzano.

Others Present: No members of the public appeared to be present (I attended via the archived videotaped meeting).

Content (What is being discussed): i.e., *Did they approve some action? Does anything relate to League priorities or positions? If so, do you recommend local league action? Was access to materials for certain agenda items limited or excluded from you? Was background material available to the public?*

The Port Commission schedules a regular monthly meeting on the third Thursday at 5:00 pm at the Fabulich Center at [3600 Port of Tacoma Road, Tacoma, WA 98424](http://www.portoftacoma.com/3600-Port-of-Tacoma-Road-Tacoma-WA-98424). However, these dates are subject to change, and the Commission also holds Executive Sessions, joint meetings of the Northwest Seaport Alliance (the marine cargo operating partnership of the ports of Tacoma and Seattle), and other special commission meetings each month. The archived video of meetings, available at (<http://portal.veconnect.us/p/portoftacoma>), makes it possible to follow the general proceedings and to have access to the materials presented), but it can be difficult to know much in advance when meetings occur that may be of special interest to citizens.

Discussion and decisions:

Special Commission meeting and work session February 7, 2019

<http://portal.veconnect.us/p/portoftacoma/e/4fc84896a84f4818929fafe1a04bfd4e>

This work session served to update the full Commission on the Tacoma Tidelands Subarea Planning Process draft work plan developed by the Steering Committee comprised of members from five governmental units: City of Tacoma (lead agency), Port of Tacoma, Puyallup Tribe, Pierce County, City of Fife. Don Meyer and John McCarthy serve as representatives from the Port Commission on this steering committee. The short meeting involved a brief review by Port staff Diedra Wilson and Evette Mason on the status of preparation of the work plan for intergovernmental activity on the Tidelands subarea plan and a final draft copy of the work plan (11 pages). Their presentation and the full draft of the proposed work plan is available at the meeting archive site (<http://portal.veconnect.us/p/portoftacoma/e/4fc84896a84f4818929fafe1a04bfd4e>)

The intergovernmental steering committee was scheduled to meet on February 8 to finalize the draft, and if any changes were proposed, the Port Commission would consider these at a meeting on Feb 11 (this meeting was cancelled due to weather). The discussion noted that the \$500,000 identified in the Nov. 14, 2018 Intergovernmental Agreement as the Port's obligation to the Tidelands Subarea planning process is contingent on the final approval of the intergovernmental work plan.

While acknowledging that the planning process will be a work of compromises, the Port Commissioners will seek to reinforce a commitment to elements in the Jan 30, 2019 final draft work plan that are in alignment with the Growth Management Act's (GMA) Container Port Element directives (Work Plan Section IV "Anticipated Outcomes); and Section V, which covers work plan elements: "The Subarea Plan, at a minimum, will address requirements under Washington State law to include State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) environmental review, Growth Management Act (GMA), Shoreline Management Act (SMA), the Puyallup Land Claims Settlement, the Container Port Element and elements for certification of a Manufacturing and Industrial Center (MIC) by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PRSC).

Discussion by Commissioners: Concern was expressed by Commissioner Johnson (speaking as a citizen involved with the Port all his life) that any plan should pay attention to the importance of maintaining jobs for persons who have been able to have living wage jobs in the Tideflats area in manufacturing and heavy industry. He worries that this broad area planning may create uncertainty about maintaining the character and value of the Port. Staff confirmed that the work so far *has been* a process of compromise, but that the representatives from the Port (Commissioners and Staff) are very committed to bringing the value of the Port's economic contribution to the discussion. Commissioner Meyer added that the process does raise issues of uncertainty around timelines, with the impact on development efforts of such features as 6-month interim regulation, but as one of the Commissioners serving on the overall Steering Committee (McCarthy is the other), he is confident that the approach described in the draft work plan is solid. With some humor, the Commission acknowledged the reality of these uncertainties, noting that individual elected/appointed members, and everyone's lives will change over the 2-4 years before an approval of the Subarea plan by the Tacoma City Council.

Observer comment: In reading the draft work plan, I can see that those who created it have attempted to be inclusive in structuring the way the planning process will work. The Tideflats Subarea Plan Process Governance includes a Steering Committee, a Staff Leadership Team, a Project Management Team, a Stakeholder Advisory Group, technical advisors, and a Public Engagement Plan. All the governmental entities will have representation in these groups. Thus, many, many meetings will be happening over the next years before any final Tideflats Subarea plans are approved. However, as some citizens have learned when participating in the "public engagement" efforts of other Tacoma Subarea planning processes, the preferred outcomes may be well narrated by the time any "official" public engagement efforts are scheduled. Their ability to add something substantive to the planning process is then quite diminished. Paying attention early on can help. Importantly, the commitment to taking the planning process beyond the City of Tacoma, by engaging other governmental groups, should make for broader and more lively conversations ahead.