

Port officials discuss jetties, airport at retreat

PORT HADLOCK — The Point Hudson jetties and Jefferson County International Airport were two priority initiatives discussed during the first of a two-day retreat of the Port of Port Townsend commissioners.

Also on the agenda during the retreat at the Old Alcohol Plant were a review of Boat Haven stormwater compliance and the possible construction of a facility that would focus on food processing, storage and distribution, located at the airport.

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No decisions will be made during the retreat.

Interim Executive Director Jim Pivarnik told commissioners that the staff is “not united” on the direction for replacement of the failing Point Hudson south jetty.

The choice is between attempting to replace the entire jetty — a \$5 million proposition — or complete repairs in increments while efforts are made to have both the north and south jetties be part of an historic district.

“We have ‘permits already in hand versus community and heritage,’ ” Pivarnik said. “Commissioners need to direct staff on which way to go.”

Pivarnik said he is going to meet with engineering consultants in the next few weeks.

“The question to ask is, ‘if this is your breakwater and you don’t have \$5 million, what would you do with it?’ Let them tell me you can do this for \$2 million and that for \$2 million.”

“That information would go a long way towards repairing and keeping it stable while other solutions come along,” said Pivarnik.

Pivarnik said he has discussed the issue with members of the community and the marine trades who are working on an historic designation angle for the entirety of Point Hudson that includes the jetties.

“The port could do a good enough job fixing one part of the south wall, then next year we could do the next 200 feet, then the next year, do the next 200 feet in the same style,” he said.

Deputy Director Eric Toews suggested commissioners look at the best way to be stewards.

“Short-term and long-term repair and replacement and protection of the Point Hudson marina is Job 1,” said. “We need to be wise stewards of the public’s trust and the public’s money. What is the most cost-effective way to do that?”

He said the commissioners should consider if it is possible to do some repair that takes into account the community’s desires and concerns.

“Through the lens I look through, I’m not focusing on either one or the other. It is the anchor of the commercial historic district,” Toews said.

Commissioners Steve Tucker and Pete Hanke ranked jetty replacement as the top priority.

Hanke said interim repair should be done now and suggested that the Northwest Maritime Center and the city of Port Townsend should vote to take on some of the debt for the repairs.

He believes permits would be easier to obtain if the jetty had historic designation status.

Tucker said the design that they have now “isn’t good” and that the community has an important say in the solution. He believes that a phased replacement is the best solution and community donors might assist if a historical designation is determined.

Commissioner Bill Putney said he has a “schizophrenic reaction.”

“I look at this asset as an income source. This project will never recoup costs and is a loss leader for the port. Point Hudson is an anchor for Water Street, the community and the city.”

Runway project

The Jefferson County International Runway Rehabilitation Project discussion focused on whether the project money would be stalled by the government shutdown and if so, could the funding that has been approved be delayed until next year.

The commissioners’ concern was whether the port would be able to come up with matching requirements for a match for grant funds in the 2019 budget and consider what would happen if they asked for a delay in beginning the work to revamp the runway.

Pivarnik suggested the commissioners might look to start the project in the first or second quarter of 2020 rather than this year and he would check to see if that was a possibility.

Hanke said he has flown in and out of the airport lately.

“It’s really hard to justify putting that kind of effort into the runway,” he said. “How many pilots use the facility? Look at the importance of the jetty versus the runway.”

Putney said the commissioners should not look at the runway as “creating a playground for wealthy people.”

“It’s critical for emergency preparedness. We’ll be an island quickly if there is a disaster.”

Tucker agreed, saying that emergency management services need to be able to use the facilities in case of a disaster.

Also on the retreat agenda are leasing policies and best management practices, strengthening the port’s financial position, leasing port property and reviewing the port’s portfolio of surplus and non-performing assets, increasing staff positions and planning for the executive director transition.

The next scheduled Port of Port Townsend business meeting is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. Jan. 23 at the Port Commission building, 333 Benedict St.

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