

Port of Port Townsend seeks more applicants for leasing policy committee

By Jeannie McMacken

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PORT TOWNSEND — Port of Port Townsend commissioners have extended the application period for a leasing policy advisory committee because they felt not enough candidates showed interest in serving.

Commissioners Steve Tucker, Pete Hanke and Bill Putney on Wednesday directed staff to extend the application period until Sept. 6. They plan to make a decision at the Sept. 12 business meeting.

Thirteen county residents submitted their interest in five positions. Two positions had only one person apply, which led Tucker, president of the commission, to suggest delaying the selection.

“I always do poorly when I’m rushed and I want to get this done, but we didn’t get a lot of applicants,” Tucker said.

“There are a couple of openings where we have only one applicant. It is my understanding that the way we created this was so we get a broad section of the community, not just port guys. We wanted to get the entire community involved in this.”

Tucker said he phoned people he knows to see if they would be interested in serving.

“I just made a few phone calls to people for some of those under-served categories for people who were interested and they said they would be happy to serve and there were several people who were interested,” Tucker said.

”Since they are not port-centric and they don’t look at port stuff, the application got past them. I would suggest that we let the application time period go a little bit longer so we can get more people to choose from.”

He said his point was “to get the entire community involved rather than just port tenants.”

Present applicants for positions are:

- Current port tenant, District 1: Ernie Baird, Boat Haven lease holder; Carl Berger, tenant; and Mark Jochems, tenant and Port Townsend Planning Commissioner.
- Current port tenant, District 2: William Berson, airport tenant; Chris Jones, lease holder; Eric Taylor, airport tenant.
- Private sector landlord: Charley Kanieski, commercial buildings owner.
- Local/Financial lending institution: Jon Murock, commercial lender; Susan Whitmire, commercial lender.
- Private sector business owner and tenant (non-port): Pete Langley, industrial/manufacturing leaseholder.

Three candidates submitted their applications citing no specific category: Ron Hayes, financial; David King, former port tenant and former Port Townsend mayor; George Yount, former Port of Port Townsend manager and Port of Olympia deputy director.

Putney said he was “was hoping to get this all done in the first quarter, and we are late.”

Tucker said that the positions were not promoted well enough.

Port Communications Manager Kimberly Matej said that no ads had been placed in newspapers; she had used the port's website, Facebook page and its electronic mailing list. She suggested asking the Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce to put a notice in their newsletter.

"There are people who have been waiting, asking for leases for months — people waiting for six months, three months," Hanke said. "We are not doing them a service by waiting."

Acting Executive Director Eric Towes reminded the commissioners that the process is to solicit comment and critical feedback on the draft policy.

"The staff will be working with Mr. Chmelik, the port's attorney, to develop a draft and then go before the committee for review and comment," Towes said.

"You will then have the opportunity for your own public process going forward to finalize that policy."

It is expected that the commissioners will have that document to review at the end of September.

After much discussion, Hanke decided to agree to wait, but to keep the leases going.

Putney reluctantly agreed.

"If we are going to wait, then I'd like to see us pursue the leases that are hanging fire if there are no issues with the leases and get them going," Putney said.

"We have way too many outstanding people month to-month. . . . It's disruptive of business to keep people hanging out there without any idea of how it's going to end."

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