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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 1, 2023

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Port pursues grants and new business for terminal

(Newport, Ore) Port Commissioners have put their support behind a grant application that the organization's management hopes will spur more diverse business to the Port of Newport International Terminal (NIT).

Improvements to nine acres of land at NIT that is currently undeveloped, as well as the purchase of two log handlers, is estimated to cost \$4.3 million. The Port's 20 percent match would amount to \$861,000 and the rest would be covered by the grant, if the application is successful. The port had already budgeted \$300,000 for the improvements to the undeveloped nine acres.

This isn't the first time the port has pursued grant dollars from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration (MARAD). At Tuesday's Port Commission meeting, General Manager Paula Miranda explained that while a previous application for the same project had been unsuccessful, there is hope in the form of MARAD's Port Infrastructure Development Grant.

"If we don't have the equipment, we can't get the customers," the manager said, explaining that the best way to assure the future of dock maintenance was by diversifying business. "We have to find ways to add additional types of business and if we don't make investments, we will never get the customers."

Miranda went on to explain that the Port already had some potential customers who have expressed an interest in giving NIT a trial run, but without the equipment, the arrangement is on hold.

Commissioner Walter Chuck, who recently joined Miranda in meetings with federal representatives, told his fellow commissioners that the lack of cargo business to the Port limits some of the funding that might be available to the facility in the future.

"We have missed out on a lot of money because we didn't have cargo," he said plainly.

Miranda acknowledged that the numbers seemed daunting but said they were not unusual and urged commissioners to consider it the cost of doing business.

"To make the terminal usable, and it's not just the terminal, you have to have services to go with it. Anything you fix on the NOAA dock or the terminal dock, you are looking at a million-dollar investment. We have to understand that, without those investments, there is not a reason to have those assets," she said.

After a lengthy conversation, the board authorized Miranda to go forward with the application, which includes a letter committing to the match dollars if successful.

In other business, the Port Commission authorized the general manager to execute the sale of Port property at 343 SW Bay Blvd to the company that owns Marine Discovery Tours for a sum of \$107,450 – equal to the taxed assessed value of the small space.

Owner Fran Mathews addressed the commission and shared the organization's goal of increasing some of the company's school programs, including more shore-side offerings.



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Across the bay, a proposal by the Port to dredge the NOAA dock area outside of the traditional in-water work window was given approval by federal and state regulators. Efforts by Miranda and Director of Operations Aaron Bretz proved successful, allowing the important work to be done sometime between August 28 and October 27 this year.

Miranda also shared a thank you to Business Oregon for a \$175,000 grant that allowed for the purchase of a forklift for use at NIT, as well as for the installation of two additional fish fillet tables at the South Beach marina.

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