



600 S.E. BAY BOULEVARD NEWPORT, OREGON 97365 PHONE (541) 265-7758 FAX (541) 265-4235 www.portofnewport.com

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CONTACT: Paula Miranda

(541) 265-7758

Plenty to discuss at year-end Port Commission meeting

An engineer's assessment of Port Dock 7, a warm welcome for new business owners, and a clean audit report were all part of the last Port Commission meeting of 2021 at the Port of Newport.

Port Operations Manager Aaron Bretz presented the findings of HDR Engineering, Inc., the firm hired to take a thorough look at the condition of Port Dock 7 and advise the Port on the necessary measures needed for its continued use.

In a written report, Engineer Andrew Fortner provided a detailed assessment of every aspect of the dock before summarizing the overall condition.

The dock, he wrote, is "in poor condition and requires urgent repairs to maintain the current level of operation. In general, the dock has reached the end its useful life and should be replaced with a facility better suited for its current use."

The discussion of use stems from the fact that the dock was originally constructed for recreational vessels much smaller than those currently utilizing the facility.

Bretz outlined a number of interim measures recommended by the engineering firm to help sustain the dock while the Port pursues funding to rebuild Dock 7. Those measures included limiting the size of vessels on some portions of the dock and replacing hardware and piles in areas where corrosion, weather conditions, and general wear have taken a toll.

"It's not like we can do some repairs and get more life out of it," he explained. "We really need to get the planning done and move that plan forward. We either need to have it replaced within five years or plan to not be able to use significant portions of it," Bretz added.

General Manager Paula Miranda said the pursuit of state and federal grants is already underway for the planning stage. With an estimated \$20 million price tag to replace, she offered reassurances that the project is a good candidate for grant dollars.

"This facility is recognized as a regional asset. I don't think there is any question of the importance to the regional economy so it's a good investment for tax dollars," Miranda explained.

Port officials say the report from HDR will be used to help guide priorities for repairs and will also be helpful in grant applications and permitting efforts.

At Tuesday's meeting, commissioners also approved changes to the lease for the Newport Marina Store, including a change in ownership from Chris Olson, who is retiring, to Craven Enterprises, LLC, which is owned by Lauren Craven. Jack Craven, who runs Yaquina Bay Charters, will work with his sister, Lauren, who has both management and retail experience, in operating the store.

"We know it's going to take a lot of time and energy, but we're really excited about the opportunity to grow the business and work together, me and my brother," she said.

"We look forward to working with you, Lauren and Jack," said Commissioner Walter Chuck. Other commissioners also offered their best wishes.

The Cravens weren't the only business owners on the agenda. The Port Commission also approved a one-year lease for Matheson Marine Services, which will rent space in what locals refer to as the old cherry plant.

Bretz explained that this business specializes in the installation and maintenance of marine electronic equipment like digital fathometers, transponders, and sophisticated navigation equipment,

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as well as marine electrical services. Already established in the area, the business has grown enough to need a shop from which to operate.

“We are happy to get somebody in there for a little while. (The business) is water related, so it fits the zoning and we’re pretty excited about this,” the operations manager said.

General Manager Miranda was also pleased with this new business relationship.

“We love the chance and opportunity to work with a local company and giving them the opportunity to grow. Hopefully this will be a success for both the Port and Matheson,” she commented.

In other good news, Port Commissioners heard a glowing report from the Port’s auditors. Kern Thompson Certified Public Accountants reported no findings, according to the presentation made by CPA Eric A. Zehntbauer.

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