

# MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Port of Olympia Commission

**FROM:** Paul Brewster, Interim Planning Manager, TRPC

**DATE:** March 20, 2026

**SUBJECT:** Peninsula Master Plan – Commissioners’ Perspectives Summary

In February 2026, Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) staff conducted individual one-hour interviews with each Port of Olympia Commissioner. Commissioners responded to six questions regarding the Port Peninsula Master Plan process and its anticipated outcomes.

This memorandum summarizes the findings, highlighting areas of alignment as well as key differences in policy priorities and vision. It is intended to help Commissioners better understand where their views converge and where tradeoffs or differing assumptions may require further discussion.

The synthesis and accompanying matrices are designed to support a shared understanding of the range of perspectives shaping the Master Plan. By clarifying these areas of agreement and divergence, this information can help inform more focused, transparent, and productive discussions as the planning process moves forward.

## Findings

### 1. What defines a “ready to implement” Master Plan?

#### Areas of Alignment

Commissioners generally agree that a “ready” Master Plan should:

- Be grounded in meaningful public engagement and demonstrate clear community benefit.
- Provide a clear vision and direction for the Peninsula’s future.
- Include actionable steps, such as phasing, implementation strategies, and financial considerations.
- Support long-term economic vitality, though approaches to this vary.

#### Divergent Perspectives

##### **Level of specificity vs. flexibility:**

Commissioner Hansen emphasized the importance of a clear and decisive plan to support timely implementation, while Commissioner Vasavada highlighted the need for flexibility to adapt to changing market conditions and opportunities.

##### **Definition of economic success:**

Commissioner Hansen focused on industrial job creation and revenue generation, while Commissioner Toompas emphasized broader community benefits, including tourism and equitable access to the waterfront. Commissioner Montano framed success in terms of “community wealth,” balancing economic, environmental, and social outcomes.

##### **Future orientation for the Marine Terminal:**

Commissioners expressed differing views on the long-term role of industrial uses. Commissioner Hansen strongly supports maintaining and expanding a working waterfront, while Commissioner Unsoeld expressed interest in transitioning toward smaller-scale, local-serving uses and reducing reliance on traditional deep-water cargo shipping. Commissioners Vasavada and Montano also support maintaining a working waterfront, while emphasizing flexibility and openness to emerging opportunities.

## 2. What is the role of existing plans and policies (e.g., Vision 2050, Destination Waterfront)?

### Areas of Alignment

- Commissioners generally agree that prior planning efforts, including Vision 2050, provide a useful foundation.
- There is recognition that conditions have evolved, and updates or refinements may be appropriate.

### Divergent Perspectives

#### **Extent to rely on existing plans as a policy foundation for Port Peninsula Planning:**

Commissioner Hansen expressed confidence in Vision 2050 as an adopted and vetted framework, while Commissioners Unsoeld raised concerns about its clarity, assumptions, and public process. Commissioner Toompas acknowledged its value but noted potential gaps in data and community representation.

#### **Continuity vs. reassessment:**

Commissioner Montano supported building from prior work, while others suggested the need for a more comprehensive reassessment of key assumptions, particularly related to land use and economic strategy. Commissioner Vasavada expresses support for Vision 2050 as a guiding framework, while emphasizing flexibility to pursue additional opportunities, including improved connectivity and tourism-based passenger-only ferry service.

## 3. How should the Port approach ongoing projects during plan development?

### Areas of Alignment

- Commissioners recognize that decisions made during the planning process may influence long-term outcomes.
- There is general agreement on the importance of clarity in roles, responsibilities, and decision-making authority.

### Divergent Perspectives

#### **Proceed vs. pause:**

Commissioner Hansen emphasized the importance of maintaining momentum and continuing projects, citing time and economic considerations. Commissioner Montano similarly supported continuing planned activities.

In contrast, Commissioner Toompas expressed interest in pausing or limiting certain developments to avoid constraining future options. Commissioner Unsoeld raised concerns about how current decisions may pre-determine outcomes before a plan is completed.

# MEMORANDUM – Peninsula Master Plan: Commissioners’ Perspectives Summary

Page 4

DATE: March 20, 2026

Commissioner Vasavada expressed a mixed perspective, supporting continuation of some projects while emphasizing the need for strategic alignment.

## **Risk and uncertainty:**

These differences reflect varying tolerance for market risk, long-term commitments, and the potential for irreversible decisions prior to completion of the Master Plan.

## 4. What priorities and tradeoffs should guide the Master Plan?

### Areas of Alignment

- Commissioners broadly support:
  - Enhancing public access to the waterfront.
  - Advancing environmental stewardship, including cleanup and resilience.
  - Promoting economic development, though approaches differ.

### Divergent Perspectives

#### **Industrial uses vs. mixed-use/tourism:**

Commissioner Hansen emphasized the importance of preserving and expanding industrial and marine terminal uses, while also supporting destination/recreation oriented activities.

Commissioner Toompas expressed openness to reducing industrial uses and considering rezoning to support tourism and community-oriented development. Commissioner Unsoeld suggested a shift toward smaller-scale, locally owned, and environmentally sustainable uses with greater emphasis on tourism and outdoor experiences.

Commissioners Vasavada and Montano also support industrial uses and expressed interest in a balanced approach that integrates economic activity with broader community benefits.

#### **Economic vs. environmental priorities:**

While all Commissioners value environmental considerations, Commissioner Unsoeld placed particular emphasis on ecological restoration and minimizing impacts such as dredging, whereas others highlighted the need to balance environmental goals with economic feasibility.

#### **Who benefits:**

Commissioner Toompas emphasized equitable distribution of benefits, while others focused more on regional economic outcomes or revenue generation to support public access to the waterfront and environmental investments. Commissioner Unsoeld emphasized environmental stewardship as a primary driver of future land use decisions, alongside economic considerations.

## 5. What key questions should the Master Plan answer?

### Areas of Alignment

- Commissioners agree the Plan should clearly define:
  - The Port Peninsula’s long-term role in the regional economy.
  - The financial feasibility of different development scenarios.
  - The appropriate mix of land uses on the Peninsula.
  - The balance between future economic development and environmental stewardship.
  - A clear and transparent narrative to communicate the Port’s value to the community.

### Divergent Perspectives

#### **Future of industrial activity:**

Perspectives differ on whether to maintain, adapt, or reduce traditional marine terminal operations, reflecting broader questions about the Port’s long-term economic strategy for the Marine Terminal District.

#### **Scope of change:**

Commissioner Hansen emphasized building from established direction. Commissioner Vasavada also expressed support for the Port’s existing enterprises, while noting the importance of diversifying water-dependent lines of business. Commissioners Unsoeld and Toompas suggested revisiting foundational assumptions related to industrial uses.

## 6. What are expectations for community engagement?

### Areas of Alignment

- Strong consensus on the importance of:
  - Early and meaningful engagement with Tribes.
  - Inclusion of diverse stakeholders, including labor, business, environmental groups, economic development leaders, and the broader community.
  - Improving transparency and accessibility of information.

### Divergent Perspectives

#### **Approach to engagement:**

Commissioner Toompas expressed interest in expanding outreach beyond traditional methods to reach a broader cross-section of the community. Commissioner Vasavada emphasized engagement with key decision-makers and community leaders. Commissioner Hansen supported broad engagement, including addressing misinformation on the Port’s operations and finances. Commissioner Montano highlighted the importance of clear, accessible data to support public understanding.

## **Perceptions of prior engagement:**

Commissioners expressed differing views on the effectiveness and representativeness of prior outreach efforts associated with Vision 2050.

## Cross-Cutting Themes and Considerations

While each question highlights specific areas of alignment and divergence, several consistent themes emerge across the interviews. These cross-cutting considerations reflect the core policy tensions and shared priorities that can help shape the Master Plan.

- **Long-term identity of the Peninsula:** A central tension exists between maintaining a strong industrial maritime role and transitioning toward a more mixed-use, community- and visitor-oriented waterfront.
- **Balancing decisiveness and adaptability:** Commissioners differ on how prescriptive the Plan should be versus how much flexibility it should retain.
- **Timing of decisions:** There are differing perspectives on whether to continue advancing projects during planning or to pause to preserve future options.
- **Trust, governance, and communication:** Underlying several discussions is the importance of clear roles, consistent information, and transparent communication to support effective decision-making and public trust.

Together, these perspectives suggest that while commissioners share many core values—such as economic vitality, environmental responsibility, and public benefit—they differ in how to prioritize and implement them. Clarifying these tradeoffs and areas of flexibility will be essential to developing a Master Plan that is both actionable and broadly supported.

# MEMORANDUM – Peninsula Master Plan: Commissioners’ Perspectives Summary

Page 7

DATE: March 20, 2026

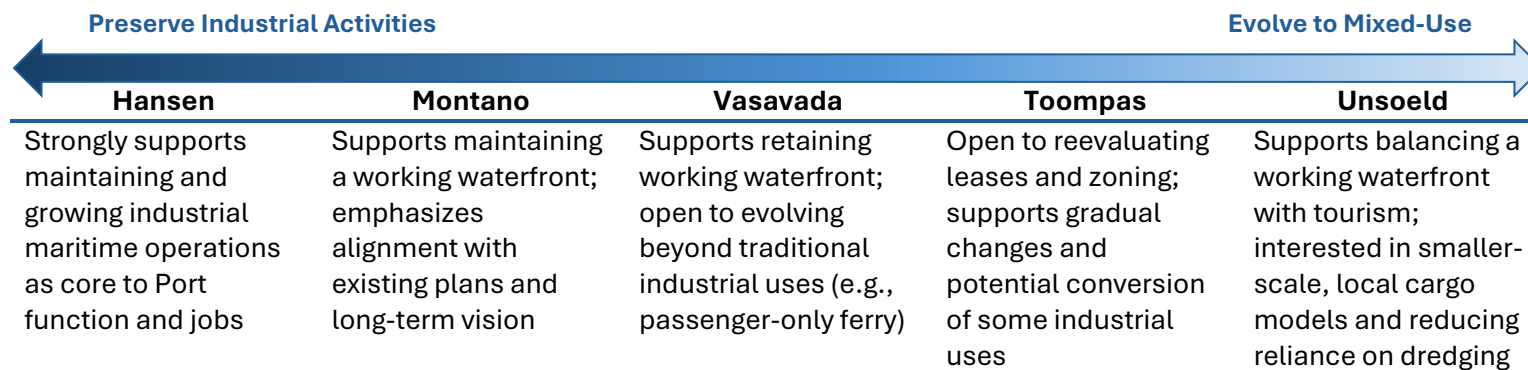
## Commissioner Perspectives<sup>1</sup>

The following matrices build on these findings by organizing commissioner perspectives across key priority areas. They translate recurring themes and tradeoffs into a visual format to clarify where perspectives align and where they differ along a spectrum.

The matrices summarize the perspectives of the Port of Olympia Commissioners on key issues for the Port Peninsula Master Plan. Each priority area is presented as a spectrum of values and policy priorities, capturing nuances in where commissioners lean rather than fixed positions. By showing areas of alignment and divergence, the matrices highlight the range of perspectives among commissioners. These visualizations are intended to foster understanding of differing viewpoints and provide a tool to guide respectful, informed discussion as the planning process progresses.

### Marine Terminal Use: Preserve Working Waterfront vs. Evolve to Mixed Use

The future of the Marine Terminal is a significant topic of community interest, highlighting the competing visions the Commission must weigh. Commissioners vary in their emphasis on preserving jobs and traditional Marine Terminal functions versus pursuing new economic opportunities or alternative community uses.



<sup>1</sup> Positions reflect themes from individual Commissioner interviews and are intended to illustrate relative perspectives across key issues. They do not represent fixed or exclusive positions.

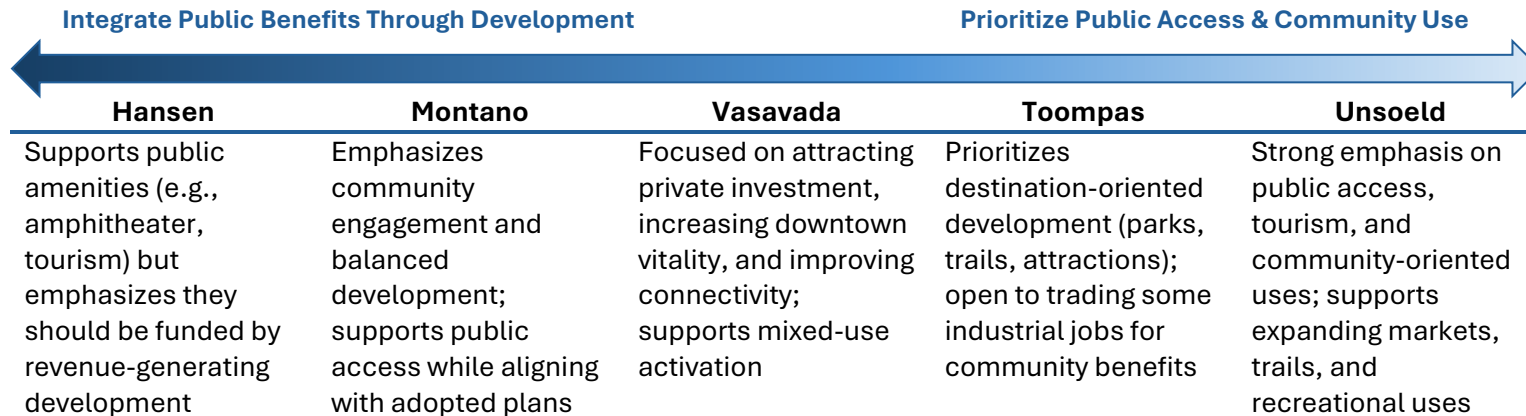
# MEMORANDUM – Peninsula Master Plan: Commissioners’ Perspectives Summary

Page 8

DATE: March 20, 2026

## Public Benefit on Urban Waterfront: Investment Driven vs. Access Driven

The development of the urban waterfront is a key focus for community input, reflecting shared interest in access, amenities, and vitality in Downtown Olympia. Commissioners differ in how they envision achieving public benefits, with some emphasizing funding open space and amenities through revenue-generating development, while others prioritize direct investments in recreation, tourism, and public spaces that can themselves drive broader economic growth.



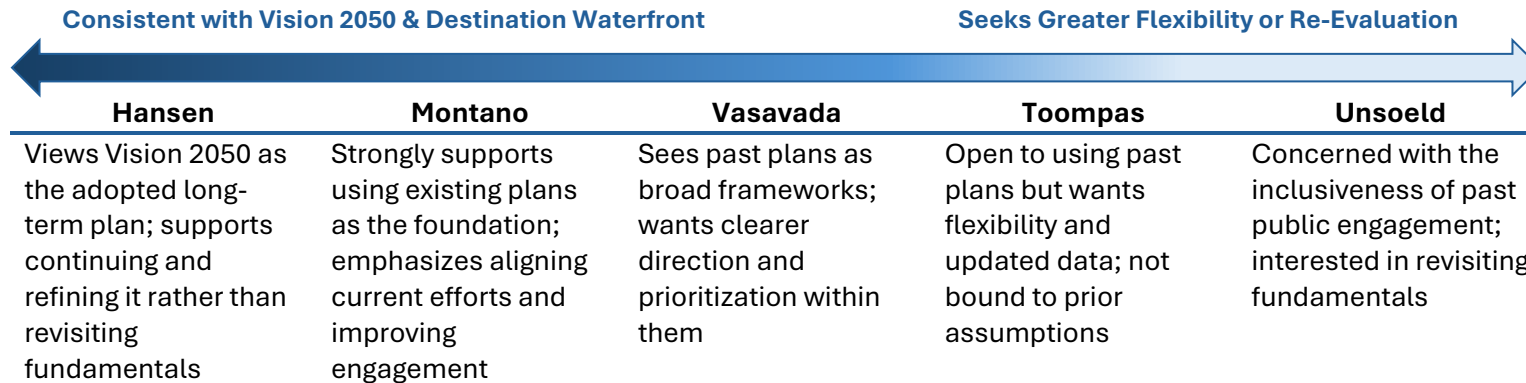
# MEMORANDUM – Peninsula Master Plan: Commissioners’ Perspectives Summary

Page 9

DATE: March 20, 2026

## Guiding Policy Framework: Guided by Existing Plans vs. Prefers Flexibility / Reassessment

How existing plans, such as Vision 2050 and Destination Waterfront, guide Port decision-making is likely to be an important point of discussion to inform how Commissioners want to frame land use scenarios for the Peninsula Master Plan process. Commissioners vary in whether they prefer adhering closely to these plans or allowing flexibility to revisit assumptions, respond to new information, and adapt strategies over time.



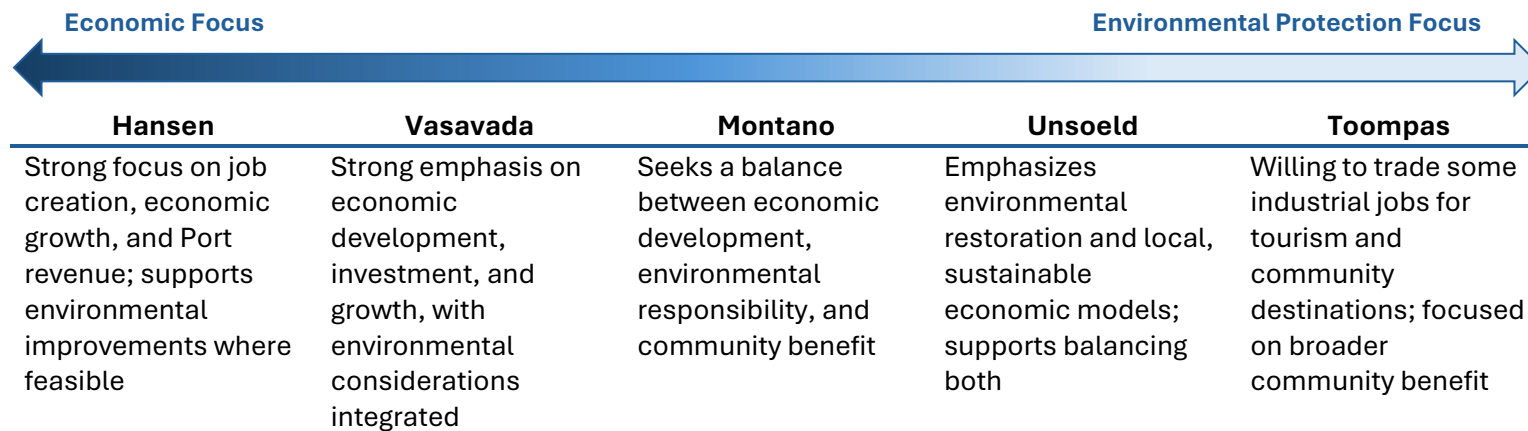
# MEMORANDUM – Peninsula Master Plan: Commissioners’ Perspectives Summary

Page 10

DATE: March 20, 2026

## Strategic Focus: Economic Development vs. Environmental Stewardship

The Port Peninsula faces environmental challenges from historic industrial operations and emerging threats from climate change. Balancing economic growth with environmental protection and resilience will remain a core focus of the Port’s work. Commissioners differ in how they prioritize strategies for economic development, environmental stewardship, and climate mitigation within the constraints of regulatory compliance and the political priorities of their constituents.



## Recommended Next Steps

The perspectives summarized in this memorandum highlight both areas of alignment and key differences in how Commissioners want to approach the Port Peninsula Master Plan. As the planning process moves forward, the following next steps are offered to support focused discussion and guide the development of the Plan:

### 1. Confirm areas of shared direction

Identify where there is clear alignment—such as the importance of economic vitality, environmental stewardship, public benefit, and meaningful community engagement—to establish a common foundation for the Master Plan.

### 2. Clarify the role of existing plans and policy guidance

Discuss how plans such as Vision 2050 and Destination Waterfront should inform the Master Plan. Commissioners should consider the degree to which these plans serve as a foundation versus allowing flexibility for new ideas and community input, including guidance on the types of scenarios to explore.

### 3. Identify high-level parameters for scenario development

Provide direction on the range of scenarios that the planning process should evaluate. This includes discussing:

- The balance between industrial, mixed-use, and tourism-oriented options.
- Whether to explore more transformative concepts (e.g., significant expansion of parks or recreation areas) or maintain a balanced approach to future development.
- The level of flexibility to allow community engagement to influence outcomes.

### 4. Provide guidance on the progression of near-term projects

Discuss how ongoing and near-term projects should be considered during the planning process, including whether to continue, pause, or sequence actions in a way that preserves options for Master Plan recommendations.

## MEMORANDUM – Peninsula Master Plan: Commissioners’ Perspectives Summary

Page 12

DATE: March 20, 2026

### 5. Use the matrices as a discussion tool

Use the Commissioner Perspectives Matrices to focus conversations about where perspectives align and where further dialogue is needed. These tools can support shared understanding and identify opportunities for decision making.