Commission Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 13, 2026

Call to Order

Commission President Jasmine Vasavada called a regular meeting of the Port of Olympia Board of Commissioners to order and open to the public at 4:02 p.m., Tuesday, October 13, 2026, at the Percival Plaza at 626 Columbia Street NW, Suite 1B, Olympics Room, in Olympia, Washington 98501.

Present

Commissioners: Jasmine Vasavada – President, Sarah Montano – Vice President, Joel Hansen – Secretary, Jerry Toompas and Krag Unsoeld.

Staff: Alex Smith, Executive Director, Megan Lin, General Counsel; Jon Wolf, Interim Director of Environmental Planning and Programs/Environmental Manager; Taber Lee, Marketing and Outreach Senior Manager; Spencer Battersby, IT Manager; and Missy Goodell, Commission Coordinator.

Guests: Megan Diment, Harbor Days; Bobbak Talebi, Director of Southwest Region, and Tessa Gardner Brown, Project Manager, Consulting Design Team, with the Washington State Department of Ecology.

Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Hansen moved to approve the agenda; Commissioner Toompas seconded the motion. Commissioner Montano moved to amend the agenda, moving agenda items G1 and G2 to come after item D, Executive Director Report. Discussion followed. Commissioner Hansen called for the question. Amended motion passed unanimously.

Executive Director Report

Alex Smith, Executive Director, reported on recent Port activities. She announced that in observance of Indigenous Peoples' Day yesterday, our regular Monday Commission meeting was rescheduled for today.

Last week, Mike Reid and Taber Lee attended the 2026 annual meeting hosted by our tourism partners at Experience Olympia & Beyond. The Port partnered with Thurston County (Thurston Solid Waste), the City of Tumwater, and GreenSheen Paint. Together, we hosted a free Paint Recycling Event on Port property in Tumwater near the Clean Water Center; it was a big success with a total of 438 cars coming from across the county, and 79,205 pounds of paint being collected.

Another successful SUP Witches event was held recently at the Ports' Northpoint Plaza. 5th graders throughout the Olympia School District continue to visit Swantown Marina for their field trips in partnership with the South Sound Estuarium. They are about halfway through their 14 scheduled field trip days, and last Thursday Commissioner Hansen had the opportunity to volunteer as a parent for his son's class.

In addition, Alex reminded everyone of the ways they can communicate with the Commission. She stated there is a great deal of information available on the Port's website and encouraged everyone to check it out.

Partner Spotlights

Harbor Days. Megan Diment, Event Organizer for Harbor Days, shared that the Olympia Harbor Days Festival, a free event offered in Olympia every Labor Day Weekend, is an award winning free and family friendly event that showcases many of the vintage tugboats of the Puget Sound with a walk aboard show at the docks and races in the bay. Visitors to the event may also find tall ships, steamships, other historic vessels of twentieth century commerce, tribal canoes, and current recreational small watercraft. Harbor cruises on Budd Bay are also offered.

On land, festival attendees enjoy great food, great music, great artisans, plus nautical and marine themed attractions, hands-on activities, including Olympia's tugboat heritage, tribal history and the working waterfront with Port of Olympia tours.

Funding sources, event costs, and challenges were shared. Future plans and goals were also communicated.

Deschutes Estuary Partners Project. Bobbak Talebi, Director of Southwest Region at Washington State Department of Ecology and Project Director for the Estuary Restoration Project, provided updates to the Deschutes Estuary project, the ongoing regional partnership and the Resolution of support.

Regional partners on this project are the Port of Olympia, the City of Olympia, the City of Tumwater, Thurston County, LOTT Clean Water Alliance, Squaxin Island Tribe, and the State of Washington (with multiple agencies from within the State participating: Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife {WDFW}, Department of Enterprise Services {DES}, Department of Ecology, and the Department of Natural Resources {DNR}).

As directed by the legislature, project design is slated to be complete by June 2027. Construction is targeted to occur mid-2028. It was reported that the Department of Ecology submitted a capital project request to start construction of this project. Construction is anticipated to last six to seven years, meaning the dam removal would likely be in the early 2030s.

Ecology's cleanup team has been working closely with the Port to discuss and figure out what the next steps are for the cleanup of West Bay in association with this project. Even though the cleanup itself is being managed through Ecology's toxic cleanup program in coordination with the Port, this is seen as being highly linked to the Estuary project even though it's not part of construction costs in project designs. As grant and funding opportunities are being pursued at the federal level, opportunities for the Port's cleanup process are also being investigated.

The Regional Partners meet every other month to inform the project. A formal letter of support, a resolution, signed by the Regional Partners, was prepared and can be used to support capital project requests to the Governor's office but can also be used in ongoing pursuits of grant opportunities in funding at the federal level.

A separate letter of support, specifically supporting the Port's clean up efforts, will be discussed at the next Regional Partner meeting as there was interest from the partners.

Public Comment
Twenty individuals provided public comments:

- Regarding the NEPA and SEPA process, 17 individuals requested to keep existing policies in place and to not change the current NEPA and SEPA process. Preference was given to keeping the current administrative appeal process in place and to continue to allow public input to ensure transparency.
- Two individuals were against expanding the Olympia Regional Airport due to perceived air pollution and noise.
- One individual thanked the Commission for amending the POCAC Resolution and moving that process forward.

Commission Response to Public Comment / Follow-Up to Public Comment
None.

Consent Calendar
Commissioner Montano moved to approve the consent agenda as presented; Commissioner Hansen seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Action Calendar
Deschutes Estuary Joint Resolution of Support. Alex Smith, Executive Director, provided background information on the Deschutes Estuary Joint Resolution of Support, how it came to be, what the Resolution states, list of Regional Partners, and options moving forward.

In 2022, the State Department of Enterprise Services decided that restoring the free-flowing estuary was the best long-term option for Capitol Lake and Budd Inlet water quality. In 2024, the Port Commission approved the Deschutes Estuary Restoration Project Interlocal Agreement (ILA) that committed the Port and other jurisdictions to support the restoration.

Regional Funding Partners are the City of Olympia, the City of Tumwater, Thurston County, Squaxin Island Tribe, LOTT Clean Water Alliance and the Port of Olympia.

The Joint Resolution supports state and federal funding to implement the restoration project and confirms support for the project as a whole; for State funding and federal funding for the project; and for the Regional Partners' commitment to the project's success and continued support. The Port had requested language supporting funding for the Budd Inlet cleanup, which the ILA recognizes as a prerequisite. Because other Partners objected (they felt it dilutes estuary focus, gives mixed messages), the Resolution advanced without language amendments.

Two options for Commission consideration were shared. The first option, Option A, was to adopt the Resolution of Support as agreed by Partners, and the second option, Option B, was to adopt the

Resolution with two Port amendments (1. Budd Inlet cleanup first, per ILA; and 2. Ecology's management authority).

Motion: Commissioner Unsoeld moved to adopt the Joint Resolution of Support for the Deschutes Estuary Restoration Project as agreed by the Regional Partners (Option A). Commissioner Montano seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Action/Other Calendar
None.

Advisory Calendar
SEPA Policy Updates. Alex Smith, Executive Director, gave a presentation on proposed updates to the 2015 SEPA Resolution. Proposed changes to the SEPA Policy were presented since the SEPA and Ecology guidance have changed since 2015 and the Port is interested in aligning with governing law.

Suggested changes affect the process only.

Proposed edits follow state SEPA requirements step-by-step, reducing confusion by eliminating differing procedural timelines and making it easier for staff and the public to track.

Proposed changes:
- 14-day comment period for Determinations of Nonsignificance and Mitigated Determinations on Nonsignificance
- Give the Port discretion to respond in writing to comments
- List routine Port activities that are exempt from SEPA Review
- Simplify service on the Port
- Remove the Climate Appendix
- Eliminate Administrative Appeals
- Proposed Process Improvement: Use of a "notice of action" to establish a clear timeline for appeals
- Proposed Process Improvement: New informal reconsideration option to allow Port to fix issues through an informal process

In summary, the proposed changes align Port procedures with state law and other jurisdictions; they are based on current SEPA laws and guidance; they provide clarity for staff and the public; they recognize limits to staff capacity and Port resources; and they only change process – not the substantive requirements the Port is required to follow under SEPA.

It was reported that the proposed revisions reduce litigation risks for the Port by clarifying and simplifying aspects of the Port's SEPA process. The revisions should not have a negative financial impact, and they may save money over the long term by reducing litigation risks.

Discussion followed. Questions were raised regarding court fees and accessibility to the court system and the cost comparison of the judicial review process versus the administrative appeal process. And while the climate change document is no longer being used, is there an option where climate change can still be addressed.

It was requested that staff bring a process forward publicly with everyone at the same time, so a mechanism can be created the provides transparency to come to agreement, a process that helps to inform and adopt changes that have to be adopted. It was requested to push this topic to November to allow for more public comment.

Commissioner Reports/Discussion
Commissioner Hansen reported that he attended no Port meetings recently.

Commissioner Montano reported that she attended the Festival of the Sparks hosted by Lacey MakerSpace. Next week she will attend an EPA Greenhouse Gas Emissions online webinar.

Commissioner Vasavada reported that she joined a community Pride campaign planning kickoff. They are looking for an opportunity for us in Thurston County and in Olympia to take back pride in our communities.

Commissioner Toompas had nothing to report but thanked those who sent in public comment and engaged in the process.

Commissioner Unsoeld reported that he had many conversations with folks regarding the issues that were discussed today.

Additional Public Comment
None.

Other Business
None.

Meeting Announcements
A list of upcoming events was displayed on the screen for viewers to see upcoming Commission meetings. Executive Director Smith stated the next Commission Meeting will be held on Monday, October 26, at 4:00 p.m.

Adjournment
There being no further business to come before the Port of Olympia Board of Commissioners, the Tuesday, October 13, 2026, meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

PORT OF OLYMPIA COMMISSION

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Jasmine Vasavada, President

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Joel Hansen, Secretary

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