



Commission Work Session
Tuesday, January 17, 2023
2:30 PM

Percival Plaza - Olympics Room
626 Columbia Street NW
Olympia, WA 98501

The meeting agenda is available on the Port's website as of January 12, 2023.
<https://www.portolympia.com/commission>

The public may join the meeting from their computer, tablet or smartphone at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89712170045?pwd=WDJKeC9KeUovVnBpR2N3YWZLUVBEdz09>

or Telephone: 1 253 215 8782

Webinar ID: 897 1217 0045

Passcode: 691485

Please note that the Zoom link changes for each meeting.

NOTE: No public comment or commission action will be taken at this Work Session.

Executive Session: The Commission will hold an executive session on Tuesday, January 17, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. to review the performance of a public employee (RCW 42.30.110(1)(g)).
The executive session is expected to last approximately 60 minutes.

AGENDA

- A. Call to Order
- B. Approval of Agenda
- C. Port Reputational Research Report from Sunshine Communications – Lisa Parks, Executive Services Director
- D. Delegation of Authority – Sam Gibboney, Executive Director / Rick Hughes, General Counsel
- E. Upcoming Topics – Sam Gibboney, Executive Director
- F. Adjourn

Port of Olympia Mission

Create economic opportunities by connecting Thurston County to the world by air, land & sea.

COVER MEMO

Briefing Date/Time: January 17, 2023

Staff Contact/Title: Lisa Parks, Executive Services Director, 360-528-8020
lisap@portolympia.com

Subject: Reputational Research Report

Purpose: ☒ Information Only ☐ Decision Needed

Background/Overview:

Mary Kay Clunies-Ross of Sunshine Communications will provide an overview of the results of her research into the general perceptions of the Port that are held by our local government and economic development partners. This research took place during this past August and September, and is intended to help inform and guide the implementation strategy for the “Communications Initiative” in the recently adopted Strategic Plan. An electronic copy of the report and an associated cover memo was provided to the Commission via email by Executive Director Gibboney on October 27th and is attached for your reference. The Communications Initiative in the Strategic Plan is as follows:

Communications- Increase the community’s understanding of the role, value, and limitations of the Port in impacting the local economy and greater Thurston community.

Launch a refreshed communications effort in 2022 to renew the community’s understanding of the Port’s role in fulfilling its Mission and commitments to the community it serves.

Documents Attached:

- PowerPoint from Sunshine Communications, LLC
- Reputational Report and Cover Memo, “Port of Olympia, Perceptions and Opportunities, October 25, 2022”

Next Steps/Timeframe:

This Reputational Report and its recommendations, as well as additional research efforts, will be used to develop a written Communication and Outreach Plan. It is anticipated this updated Plan will be complete by mid-year, 2023, and staff will be providing the Commission with regular updates on our progress toward that goal

Port of Olympia Perceptions and Opportunities



Mary Kay Clunies-Ross
Sunshine Communications, LLC
January 17, 2023



Approach: Reputation Assessment

What it is

- Institutional
- Long-term view
- Small sample of other local government and EcDev
- General perception (not project or service-specific)
- Research that supports outreach and communication strategies
- Interviews: August, September

What it isn't

- Not personal
- Not current events
- Not public opinion
- Not customers
- Not staff
- Not specific to operations for feedback or planning

Overall Findings

- General recognition of lots of change in last 100 years.
- This is a challenging community for everyone working on economic development in a region with a heavy dependence on state jobs. (This is not unusual.)
- The Port has a lot to be proud of; a great story to tell about it's past and future; and an important, unique role to fill in the community.
- There is a strong desire to have more regular engagement with the Port in the community and at leadership tables.
- There is also recognition that Port is not staffed comparably to other government agencies and the approach may be different.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths (Internal)	Weaknesses (Internal)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good financial position • Waterfront location • Services and properties • Current port leadership • Community supporters • Clear environmental mission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not staffed/resourced for level of communications, engagement needed • Structure: appointed manager, elected board • Misperceptions about services, finances, mission, available options • Not effective partnership with unions • Internal dissatisfaction
Opportunities (External)	Threats (External)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate people • Green jobs and sustainability • Estuary restoration/Budd Inlet • Use waterfront to connect Olympia with other places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public opinion turning against support for marine terminal • Attitudes about the land near the airport • Lack of common sources of public information

Next Steps

- Findings are being integrated into strategic communications
 - Internal
 - External (government, economic development)
 - External (public)
- As commission expands, there is an opportunity to redefine the ambassador/standard-bearing role of commissioners. This requires:
 - Clarity on different roles of commission and executive/staff
 - Collaborative approach
 - Planning
 - Training
 - Structured information sharing

Port of Olympia
Reputation Project
Weekly Summary and Look Forward



Date: October 25, 2022
To: Sam Gibboney and Lisa Parks
From: Mary Kay Clunies-Ross, Sunshine Communications
Subject: Port of Olympia Reputation Report

The Port of Olympia (Port) has gone through extraordinary changes in its first 100 years. Starting in an era with a need for timber exporting and different values regarding community, economy and environment. The port is now is an economic development hub, connecting Thurston County to the rest of the world by air, land and sea. It thinks globally, competes regionally and serves locally.

Entering its second 100 years, the Port is taking a stronger local leadership role and embarking on important new environmental and community-focused projects. For example, the dredging of Budd Inlet, which is necessary to preserve shipping traffic and the marine terminal, is also an opportunity to lead on restoration projects. That work will be more effective if the Port first understands, and then improves, how it is perceived by stakeholders and the public.

The goal of this project was to:

- Engage a small group of key stakeholders in candid conversation in order to develop a greater understanding of the Port's reputation. The research focus was nonprofits and agencies who are current or potential institutional partners. (The report does not include research into the perceptions of the general public, of employees or of potential customers. While reputation is important in all those areas, this research was on partners.)
- Provide a strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats (SWOT) analysis of the perception data and some of the Port's current challenges.
- Identify areas for improving how the Port works with other government agencies and nonprofits in order to accomplish its mission.

The Port has a great story to tell about its present and future role in the community. Its vision for an environmental, sustainable, job-generating port is essential to the region, and improving how it engaged other leaders will help the Port's credibility and success.

There is much for the Port to be proud of in this report. For both Port leadership and commission, there is a wealth of opportunity here. Other agencies and nonprofits are eager to have the Port "at the table" and their doors are open to more conversation. While the Port is a smaller organization than some other local governments, it can still be mighty in impact.

The “Next Steps” section describes some of the strategies and tactics that will help put the Port where it needs to be. Specific areas of growth include

- Prioritized personal connections
- Increased education around Budd Inlet
- Increased education around economic development.

Having more, open conversations with partners will also help build the relationships that are central to regional cooperation. The Commission has an important role to play as well.

Next Steps

We are more than happy to meet with you and present this report to the Commission or executive leadership. We know that reputation reports can generate significant interest and we are happy to present the findings and answer questions.

The important thing to note is that any report like this can only capture one moment in time. Even for an organization that is 100 years old, reputations can be improved when everyone works together to make thoughtful, intentional change.

Port of Olympia Perceptions and Opportunities



Mary Kay Clunies-Ross
Sunshine Communications
10/25/2022



Why reputation matters, and why it matters to the Port of Olympia right now

Reputation is crucial in both business and government effectiveness, and extensive research demonstrates that organizations with good reputations are more stable over time. A strong reputation allows organizations to move quickly, attract supporters, recruit and keep highly skilled staff and ultimately contribute more to their communities. Reputation can be hard to quantify but includes how specific audiences think about an organization’s culture, environmental impact, fiscal responsibility, reliability, effectiveness in performing core services and more.

The Port of Olympia has gone through extraordinary changes in its first 100 years. Originally founded in an era with different economic needs and values regarding community and the environment, the Port is now an economic development hub that connects Thurston County to the rest of the world by air, land and sea. It thinks globally, competes regionally and serves locally.

While the Port is now future-focused, working intensively to develop jobs and enhance the nearby environment and community, it has not always been so. The Port is also struggling with an issue common to many special purpose governments: the public does not completely understand its mission and services. This disconnect can lead to misunderstandings with real operational effects.

Entering its second 100 years, the Port is taking a stronger local leadership role, and embarking on important new environmental and community-focused projects. That work will be more effective if the organization first understands, and then improves, how they are perceived by stakeholders and the public.

Contents

Why reputation matters, and why it matters to the Port of Olympia right now	1
Reputational Assessment Purpose and Scope.....	2
Approach.....	4
Findings	5
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats	10
Next Steps: Building, Implementing, Monitoring and Adapting.....	16
Conclusion.....	17
Appendix: Community Volunteers.....	18

Reputational Assessment Purpose and Scope

Improving others' perceptions of a century-old organization is a multi-year project, but every journey starts with a first step. This report is intended to:

- Develop a wide-angle view of perceptions of the Port held by institutional partners such as individuals in other local government and economic development agencies.
- Provide a strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats (SWOT) analysis of the perception data, with recommendations on strategy.
- Outline how that strategy might translate into improved tactics around outreach and communication.

These objectives are for the most part sequential, but throughout the interview process, we shared relevant findings with Port leadership so that when possible, improvements could be made prior to the development of a comprehensive plan.

What the report is NOT intended to do: It's important to note that while this report focuses on external institutional partners, is it not intended to capture the perceptions of other stakeholder groups, including:

1. **Current or potential customers.** While perception can be a factor in competing for business, this work is not focused on customers. We did not engage companies who use or are considering using Port services at the marine terminal, airport, marina or other properties.
2. **Employees.** Earlier this summer, Port employees raised a variety of concerns with management and workforce culture. Employees are important stakeholders, but with a wholly different set of concerns that should be addressed by Port leadership and human resource professionals. The Port's communication work can incorporate the interests of both internal and external audiences, but the research in this report is solely external.
3. **The general public or community groups.** This is a qualitative assessment of reputation among a select group of individuals and organizations and not a generalizable study of public opinion¹. A robust and demographically representative assessment of public opinion would be valuable and could be considered in the future, if resources allow. For example, direct engagement with leaders of BIPOC communities may illuminate new opportunities for partnerships. And if the Port wishes to measure the outcomes of a public-facing communications campaign, it would be useful to have benchmarkable data.

Note: Perceptions are not always based on facts

Reputation is based on individuals' opinions, experiences and perceptions of facts, and may not be entirely accurate. The goal of understanding reputation through interviews is to hear and better understand the perceptions of local leaders, not to correct them.

Rather than exclude misunderstandings, we included them to indicate areas where more public education may be necessary.

¹ Several members of the public heard about this effort and volunteered to be interviewed. A sample of their comments are included in an appendix, but with the caveat that they are a small, self-selected group, and we can't assume they are representative of broader public (in terms of their knowledge of Port operations, or their opinions).

To be clear: All these are important groups whose perspectives matter and should be considered and addressed in ways that advance the Port's Vision 2050 plan. We are simply clarifying that they are specialty audiences with different sets of concerns that were not within the scope of this study.

Approach

The foundation of an organization's reputation is built on a common and clear understanding of the organization's purpose and value. Without this solid factual foundation, misunderstandings, confusion and broken relationships can lead to negative perceptions.

The good news is a well-organized reset can get everyone back on the same page and moving forward together. Organizational self-awareness leads to organizational improvements. By having a greater understanding of stakeholders' perceptions of the Port, the Port can make the improvements necessary to rebuild trust and relationships. Authentic engagement will help the Port be an effective community partner and economic-development engine for years to come.

Achieving the objectives has three general phases:

Information Gathering: The first step is to better understand both the positive and negative aspects of the Port's reputation. We reviewed the Port's media coverage, evaluating stories for tone, topics and inaccuracies, and looking at relevant social media sources for the same.

This report is informed by the media scan, but focuses on the learnings from stakeholder interviews. We selected a sample of leaders from other local governments, the economic community and the environmental nonprofit community to share their perspectives. Seven, one-hour interviews were done with this group. Participants were encouraged to be candid and comments (direct and paraphrased) are included in this report but without identifying information.

These interviews focused on:

- economic development and job growth,
- environmental stewardship,
- perceptions of the Port as a community partner, and
- sources of information about the Port.

Analysis: This report combines the information gathered and identifies trends in feedback and opportunities for improvement.

Recommendations: This report identifies priority areas for improving the Port's communication and engagement. This will help the Port be a better community partner and will advance the community's needs as they were expressed in Vision 2050.

Findings

Overall, the Port is in a relatively good position within Thurston County. Staff and services are generally well-regarded by the leaders we interviewed. When negative reputational issues were raised, they did not tend to be issues of competence; rather, they tended to be issues of lost opportunities. Here is a typical sampling of comments that illustrate those points.

Port services and staff are generally well-regarded and recognized as necessary by other governmental leaders and those in the economic development community.

I look at them as bringing so much economic vitality to this region.

For national security, we need the Port as a secondary port for JBLM. So as we look at disaster preparedness, we need other access points for security and disaster resiliency and transport. The public just sees logs leaving, and they don't see why else we need the Port.

I'm a big supporter of the Port. The Port can be very helpful for our community. People get focused on ports making money. The Port doesn't need to make a bunch of money, they need to be fiscally responsible and not lose money. I want the Port to support the whole community. And I think they've done a good job of that, from my perspective.

I think they're good with land management [but] they could also use it much better than they do now.

I've always felt that the staff has been top notch in their dedication to the Port. The marine terminal people and lease people have been very professional. I have good relationships ... They've always been extremely professional.

The marine terminal- in terms of operations and logistics, there don't seem to be hiccups. It's of limited scale, of course, but the airport operations are fine, though limited.

From what I see, it's a pretty well-run port when it comes to the cargo side. There's not accidents.

There is a general recognition that the Port is in a challenging position.

Among elected officials, economic development and environmental leaders, there was a strong recognition of the difficult position that the Port, and Port leadership, are in. The Port is 100 years old and because of its dominance on the waterfront, is the "heir" to a great deal of environmental waste left behind by various industries over the decades. Although the damage was not caused by the Port, because of the need to dredge and remediate Budd Inlet, it must manage messes that it is not solely responsible for. In running the airport, the Port is unique among other local governments in navigating requirements of the Federal Aviation Administration.

With both marina and the airport, I know they're two kinds of operations. I know the FAA isn't easy to deal with, and you have to deal with the federal bureaucracy.

Transitions are always hard. Ed was at the end of his career. A new ED always has to prove themselves. It's tough. On top of that, [Sam] was going into a role traditionally held by a male and that should have been applauded, and instead it was a challenge.

[One of the greatest misconceptions is] The idea that it's not "of" the community. It's got elected officials, it provides local jobs, [but] it's perceived as this monolith that is not connected. The City struggles with that as well. That's a struggle for government at all levels.

They've done the best they can to navigate choppy water.

I thought the 2050 Vision was a good approach, [and] I'd like to see them more out in the community. There's about 85% of the public doesn't know what the Port does. There's an education process that needs to continue. I know it means using taxpayer money to do it, but I think it's highly important to get people to understand.

One of the reasons ports are public agencies is because communities have economic development needs that aren't met by the private sector. Ports and other publicly funded economic development engines are intermediaries between the interests of the public and the private sector, with the goal of creating economic stability, opportunity and job growth.

But in a community like Olympia, where the major "industry" is state government, support for economic development is less present. While many Thurston County families are dependent on the state for employment, those salaries are paid by private-sector jobs and businesses elsewhere. Some believe the public undervalues and misunderstands the need for the private sector in general, and they focus on the Port as a symbol. (A public poll could map these attitudes more definitively, but it's a dynamic that several stakeholders noted in the interviews.)

This region has so many dynamics. We have three cities with different communities, and then we have the county, and state government, so it gets hard to navigate. Communication is the best answer. We have more in common than we have differences, and talking helps us focus.

A lot of these state employees (getting MPA and not MBA) are focused so much on public sector without an understanding of the private sector.

Economic development is seen with great skepticism in Olympia.... people really don't connect that jobs and employers pay taxes.... There's friction in the community between the trades and the public employee unions.

I look at this whole group of people who are small, but loud, and they're just anti-everything. Navigating that group of people is very hard.

We have a community that's against warehouses, etc. We have a community biased against blue-collar jobs.

The sad part is that in our community, there's always a small minority that will keep picking. File lawsuits, say untrue things at public meetings. And government officials don't want conflict with citizens, but then the citizens get away with saying so many untrue things. The Port needs to better tell their story. What a sad thing to have to say. Because when they're doing that, they're not doing something else. But there has to be a way.

There is also the challenge that the Port is sometimes the backdrop for protests that are not wholly about Port services. For example, protests about the timber, mining or military industries can happen when the Port is shipping for those customers. People aren't generally targeting the Port directly, as other shipments are managed without protest, but they may be trying to pressure the Port into rejecting those customers.

Structurally, elected commissioners and an appointed manager can be a real struggle, especially when they are not in alignment. Although these interviews did not seek feedback on any individuals, many community leaders believed that a former commissioner was actively working against the Port's mission, which damaged institutional relationships as well.

I think the staff is besieged by the public environment, the last iteration of the Port Commission was brutal, this iteration is much better. They are more practical. But the previous environment was incredibly toxic. The executive director tried to protect staff as much as possible from the commission, and that was hard. I know it's hard to manage people who go rogue, and there's been a lot of infighting.

They do get beat up a lot because they represent business. For example, there would be protests for JBLM, logs, etc. I get the whole battle-hardened attitude.

Be confident. They have retreated into a defensive position for too long.

It's got to be brutal to only meet with your bosses in public.

While there is a great deal of understanding and empathy, there is also a frustration that the Port does not communicate and engage more consistently. This limitation is hindering public trust, effective relationships and progress.

This is the most consistent criticism of the Port. Examples given by interviewees include past and present commissioners, executive leadership and staff, indicating this may be a longer-standing, institutional problem.

They're so isolated—the "point" is behind security, so you don't see what goes on there all the time. There is a need for them to be more visible, more present. They seem rudderless right now.

Tough to get a hold of—I send leads, they don't follow up... my teams get frustrated because they just don't respond.

Once they're on something, they're on it. But they're focused on what they're doing, but as a partner, our staff feels like we're not a partner, we're an appendage

I have good relationship with Sam, we involve them as well as we can...

Port's a little insular, but they need advocates outside the economic development world, too.

I've asked for their participation a few times, but no answer. I'd like to have them involved. ... they have significant property holdings near the downtown. ... I'd prefer them there, but I'm not going to slow down the project if they don't show up. They're choosing to not be at the table. It seemed clear that they didn't want to be at the table and didn't think it was valuable to them.

I think there are opportunities to engage on specific issues, and then there are opportunities costs with them not engaging more generally.

There are opportunities for partnerships that we could explore. Things come up in casual and formal settings about projects and other opportunities to work together [but the Port misses them because they're not there consistently]. It's that lack of consistent engagement.

The Port is still a missing piece of the Thurston climate mitigation plan. With the Port not being part of that, they're not seen as real community partners.

They are missing opportunities for partners and allies, but if they're not trusting other people, other people will trust them. They don't need to go it as alone as they think.

Deaf ears. If I can't get any acknowledgement of the need to change, you can see where the frustration comes up.

Communication is a gap.

It was also noted that even when engaged, Port representatives have not always contributed positively or it has not added to an ongoing relationship.

The culture of not knowing how to work with other agencies was there before, but its not been made better.

I think certain former commissioners wanted to tear down the whole infrastructure of the Port.

They've been very combative. Everything feels us against them. Sometimes we don't reach out and engage them because it's so combative. ... that's been going on for a while. I look at this whole group of people who are small, but loud, and they're just anti-everything. Navigating that group of people is very hard.

[The partnership] was transactional in nature. (not ongoing)

That development is a big deal, but what's going on. There's no communication about it. I gave my time for the visioning work, but I don't know where that is.

All interviewees who talked about this as a challenge, also talked about it as an opportunity.

There needs to be more outreach and they are opportunities to have more partners.

There's a lot of trust-building that needs to happen.

I would hope they could better share with the public what they do. Maybe our citizens don't care. I would hope they could up their communication and better teach the public about the Port. That would get more support for what the Port does.

Sam needs to get out of her bubble and not just talk to managers, talk to the elected mayors. She needs to develop relationships with legislative bodies and the elected officials. She needs to be more approachable, do more relationship building, have more transparency and communication with people who make decision. It's not just administrators and city managers who make decisions.

I'm hopeful because I like the new group of Port commissioners because they get business and they get their job is economic development. And you can take care of the environment at the same time. It's a really tough job.

All feedback is information that is needed to improve, and stakeholders were very appreciative of the fact the Port is seeking out their opinions. This can be an uncomfortable process but they know it comes out of desire to do better.

For me, it's about developing relationships and making sure people know where I'm coming from. I want the Port to be successful. But being connected to the people is the most rewarding thing.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

This is a different way at looking at some of these same issues and seeing how the information can become actionable.

Strengths (Internal) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good financial position• Waterfront location• Services and properties• Current port leadership• Community supporters• Clear environmental mission	Weaknesses (Internal) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not staffed/resourced for level of communications, engagement needed• Structure: appointed manager, elected board• Misperceptions about services, finances, mission, available options• Not effective partnership with unions• Internal dissatisfaction
Opportunities (External) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educate people• Green jobs and sustainability• Estuary restoration/Budd Inlet• Use waterfront to connect Olympia with other places	Threats (External) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public opinion turning against support for marine terminal• Attitudes about the land near the airport• Lack of common sources of public information

Strengths

The Port has a lot of intrinsic resources that position it well in the county.

- **Good financial position:** While Port finances in general are complex due to the variety of funding streams and governmental and non-governmental service lines, the Port is widely perceived as financially stable.
- **Waterfront location:** The waterfront development plans are seen as beneficial and the Port services are visible. This is an opportunity for greater understanding.
- **Services and properties:** The variety of locations and services managed by the Port put it in a strong position to expand the ways it serves the community.
- **Current Port leadership:** Other community leaders recognize the current Port leadership (both elected and executive) as a body who understand and value the importance of economic development, job growth and environmental restoration, and could be effective emissaries of the Port to other organizations and agencies.

They're boosters! Use them.

Current port politics are in pretty good shape. They seem more steady with current commissioners.

Using the commission to engage the community is an opportunity.

- Community supporters: Albeit a small sample, the interviewees are also mayors and leaders of influential organizations. Despite some feelings about past incidences or lost opportunities, they want the Port to take a stronger, more public role. There is also openness to being empowered to share the Port's message.

I should be able to communicate that to any citizen that I talk to. I can say some things today that I know they do, but I wish I could tell people more.

- Clear environmental mission: Local and global environmental work matters in Thurston County, and if the Port leans into this work and communicates about it effectively, it will likely be well-received.

Weaknesses

These are the internal conditions that make the Port's work more challenging.

- Staffing: Port leadership values partnerships, transparency and engagement, but it is not perceived as being staffed to do that adequately. Staffing for community engagement, partnership and cooperation takes time. Relationship building also requires time and consistency, and it's important for the Port to engage thoughtfully with people at different levels of the organization: elected officials, executive managers, content-matter experts. The Port does not always seem to have enough people or resources to do this important work.
- Structure: Some people feel that an elected body with an appointed manager is a difficult one. On one hand, the manager (be it an executive director, city administrator, etc.) tends to have a more technical, professional background that can benefit an organization; on the other, an ever-changing elected body can cause a whiplash of organizational priorities.
- Misperceptions about services, finances, mission and available options: There is a perception that the public does not understand some of the Port's fundamentals. There is not a consistent, reliable fact base, creating misunderstanding and disputes about facts.
- Internal dissatisfaction: The challenges of leading the Port through change and infrastructure investments is already significant, but employee dissatisfaction adds a challenging dimension to the work. (As the focus was the perception of external stakeholders, no employees were interviewed for this survey. That said, they are an important group for engagement and information-sharing.)
- Relationship with unions. While some tension between employers and bargaining groups is to be expected, there is also room for cooperation as both groups want the same outcomes—a

strong Port and good, stable jobs. While some Port services may be seen by some segments of the public as “old-fashioned,” unions can help tell the story of these important jobs.

People don't know what a longshoreman does, or how many there are, and where do they live, and how. The union seemed like they didn't want to share what they're doing.

Opportunities

The desire to work with the Port in the future far outweighs the frustrations of the past. Partners see the Port as a nexus of many different kinds of opportunities that can benefit the entire county. These interviews were not meant to be overly prescriptive on strategic services, and below are examples of the different ways that partners perceive the Port as being able to grow stronger and improve in relevance.

- Educate people: The need for more communication has been mentioned. With a broad variety of good services, and a public information gap, there is a lot the Port could do to educate the public. Topics of interest include environmental history, economic history, the Port's role in economic development and more.

Port tours would be good. Get people through the gates. Even for high school classes—the students talk to their parents about what's happening. Taking the curtains back and showing what is really happening there.

Turn port lands into public lands or shared/community space [where safe to do so]. That would speak to the local community. There's local access at Swantown, and Olympia Block Party, they've had a Port booth there at the past, and you're going to reach a population that doesn't normally think about port.

There's conflict—and old—between the port and the community. The community is ambivalent about the Port. The Port is not great at telling their story and telling people what they do.

You can't turn the marine terminal into park. It's too polluted. But it's also a big part of how Oly developed. We are a Sound-based city. We ought to own and participate in that. We have plenty of recreational options, but the marine terminal cannot be replaced. The Port doesn't communicate enough about what economic impact it has.

They certainly have employees, but I don't think of the Port as a job-development or the jurisdictions themselves, but I don't see the Port as part of that. More the transportation section ... just helping people get their stuff in and out. The Port keeps trucks off I-5, so that's good [for the environment].

The Supply Chain Caucus is a good opportunity to educate on the marine terminal, what the Port did during the pandemic and how that transitions into the future. The risk/challenge is keeping the shipping channel open, and we need to talk about how we do that.

- Creating green jobs and highlighting environmental work: There is a lot of interest in having the Port have a more explicit focus on job training, green manufacturing, leveraging real estate holdings to support green jobs around the Inlet and more. Environmental work is a highly shared value in the county, and additional (or more visible) work in this area would be welcome at both the local and legislative levels.

A good commuter air service, more logistics warehousing. It could be more like Paine Field, do more aeronautical things. I've always thought we could do more manufacturing for green energy, solar panels, etc. Because it's right on the freeway, with air and Port service. This could be very high tech and green.

Their pollution isn't just from them, it's from industry around them. But they do have to dredge. They have a major river, and you're going to get a lot of sediment.

I'm rooting for the Port to be successful, both as a community member and as someone who cares about jobs. Especially in terms of real estate development, there is a real opportunity.

- Estuary/Budd Inlet/other environmental improvements: Environmental and governmental leaders recognize the enormity of the work that needs to be done around Budd Inlet—they also recognize the opportunity to educate and engage the public about the environmental legacy, the challenges and opportunities of restoration and the plan for the future.

Especially as we move into making Capitol Lake an estuary, we all need to be at the table. Budd Inlet is definitely an opportunity for them. I do think they're trying to be a good partner.

It's going to be a massive undertaking and that would be huge [to have a public advisory board] over the BI project. That would help them get more community buy-in and having that oversight would give you a whole bunch of people who could tell the story. This would be a huge thing for the Port to do for the community, and the community should get involved.

The general public is never as aware about environmental issues as they should be. If you walk around the Port, you see the signs that have some good information about the water health and contamination. People [in this area] are generally well-educated about environmental issues.

Budd Inlet is definitely an opportunity, but whether they can do it or not is another question. There are a lot of people who would want to be at the table, but the question is whether the current management is able to convene and navigate all those different interests. I've been a part of port projects, but then I never hear anything again, and I wonder, what happened to that?

Change can be made and trust can be rebuilt, but I don't see a track record of them [being a real engaged, consistent community partner].

We don't need to know everything, but complete radio silence [after an engagement] doesn't help either. So there is a balance you're trying to strike there.

It's definitely big, no doubt about it. We're going to have a lot of shift. Doing some of the restoration, it'll be a massive inconvenience, but overall it's a good strategy to restore waterways.

It's a great angle, to have the tribe on your side, educate about legacy pollution that was not caused by the Port, but working together with Puget Sound groups, state and federal. That would really resonate.

Explaining the cost and the effort they're making to ensure that the yard itself is not creating more negative impacts on sound health.

- The Port may want to consider developing a sustainability coordinator or similar position, focused on environmental work. They could be an ambassador for the Port, joining environmental and climate-related work groups and helping people understand the Port's environmental mission.
- Waterfront connections: The people interviewed deeply valued the connection the Port has to Olympia's waterfront. And while certainly that stewardship brings with it serious challenges, it also brings good opportunity in terms of expanding boat marinas and considering other transportation options, such as a water taxi.

Threats

For a business, external threats are generally competitors, disrupted supply lines, regulation, labor shortages and other changing conditions that threaten the ability to stay open. The threats faced by public agencies are threats of effectiveness. For example:

- Public opinion turning against the marine terminal and the Port in general. Although one cannot gauge public opinion without a broader survey, some members of the public question the need for marine-terminal services. The services are often the hosting location for political actions against various industries (actions which are intended to drive business away from Olympia and to another port).

We probably do lose business to other ports because people don't want to deal with the politics here. They don't want to catch heat. I know it is a deterrent for the military. I know the public wants a voice. But from a pure business, that's a missed opportunity.

- Attitudes about the land near the airport. Airports and surrounding land are highly regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration, an agency not known for flexibility. However, different people in the community have different thoughts about how that land should be best utilized, and what the Port should do about it. This has made the Port a focus of some extremely vocal criticism, which is being heard by others, including legislators. While the Port's hands may be tied by federal law and regulation, it could do more to help other stakeholders understand those limitations and/or be a more proactive partner in supporting community goals in the context of the FAA-imposed limitations on the land development.

- There is a lack of a reliable, common source of information in Olympia. Of all the conflicting perspectives encountered during these interviews, this point was unanimous: The Olympian is not a reliable source of information about local government. It is considered understaffed and inconsistent.

Our local newspaper is meek and under-resourced. They can't even find anyone to deliver the paper.

While there is interest in the Jolt, a new online publication, it is not well-established and is generally considered more of a site where opinions are hosted (rather than a news site, with traditional objective news standards).

As a result, the majority of citizens and stakeholders relied on a combination of word-of-mouth and direct experience. Elected leaders tend to engage at the executive or commissioner level, for example, and residents and activists tend to follow meetings, read documents online, and discuss issues in private internet forums.

This only intensifies the need for Port leadership, commissioners and staff to be actively involved in the community, where they can be asked questions, answer them, and get early warning of inaccurate information that may be circulating.

Next Steps: Building, Implementing, Monitoring and Adapting

The Port has a great story to tell about its present and future role in the community. Its vision for an environmental, sustainable, job-generating port is essential to the region, and engaging other leaders will help the Port's credibility and success.

Reputations are built and improved over long periods of time. Ben Franklin said, "It takes many good deeds to build a good reputation, and only one bad one to lose it." (and that was before the internet created a place for bad deeds to live forever, whether or not they are true).

Part of developing an effective strategy includes identifying a path for long-term improvements that can be part of ongoing Port operations. All planning and recommendations should take into account Port resources, both internal and external.

Implications/recommendations for strategy

The Port has a real opportunity and need to increase its communications to (and with) a broad variety of stakeholders. While immediate steps can always be taken, it's important to understand that this is ultimately long-term work. Slowly and steadily, the Port can open itself up to the public and a variety of mission-advancing partnerships.

This body of research is only one piece of developing a communication- and engagement-plan for the Port, as all organization plans need to balance strategic needs, opportunities and resources.

That said, there are some trends in the stakeholder research that shine a light on priority issues for growth, including:

- **Prioritized personal connections and listening**
 - This isn't just the job of the executive director: Port staff and commissioners can also connect the Port directly with other organizations (more on this below).
 - The types of partner organizations and agencies is nearly limitless (although of course time is not). Thought should be given to how to connect with other governments, economic development engines, schools, universities, planning groups and more. Interactions should benefit both parties and relationships will grow over time.
 - The more exposure the Port has to other leaders and groups, the more opportunities for collaboration will naturally emerge.
- **Educate about the environmental history of Budd Inlet**
 - The Port is taking a leadership role on complex environmental work.
 - The community will benefit and has a lot to be proud of.
 - Its important to set expectations about the pace of the project, and which parts are driven by regulatory requirement and which are public-driven.
 - Help people see for themselves with tours and signage.

- **Educate on the Port's economic development work.** There's a lot of community learning that can be done on this, including what it means, who it helps, why they, as a public agency should do it, and how they measure success.

Increasing the Port's reach

As noted in the SWOT analysis, staffing is a significant challenge for the Port, which is a much smaller organization than other local governments. It would be difficult, even impossible, to send a staff person to every related organization and meeting. At the same time, those partnerships are essential for improving the Port's ability to generate jobs and economic stability in the county.

Two complementary approaches can help close the gap.

- 1) **Set and share priorities.** Vision 2050, as well as annual strategic and work plans, are essential methods for developing and setting clear priorities. Those priorities can then be shared with key partners so that everyone can have a common understanding of where the Port will be visible and active, and where it may be more of an observer. Having accurate expectations is the first step in reducing disappointments.
- 2) **Cultivate more standard-bearers.** Community-relationship building is sometimes considered to be the sole purview of the top executives. But in a smaller, flatter organization like the Port, many other people can play that role. For example, commissioners have important roles to play as ambassadors, as do top-level managers. Both groups can and should coordinate with Port leadership, and training and orientation-settings may be helpful in developing a good working approach.

Having more, open conversations with partners will also help build the relationships that are central to regional cooperation. While the Port may not be able to permanently staff every group and attend every meeting, it can always have clear priorities, transparent interests and open doors of communication.

Conclusion

While this is a reputational, and not a business, analysis, there is certainly a relationship. The Port is respected for fulfilling its core functions well, but has a reputation for being insular. A major theme of the feedback is that local leaders would like to do more with the Port; if the Port was not respected, that would not be the case.

While the Port has a small staff, especially in comparison to the other governments and to many other ports, many of its strategic priorities will be advanced better in partnership than by going alone. As the organization evolves, prioritizing these relationships will improve both reputational and strategic objectives.

Appendix: Community Volunteers

While the interviews with community stakeholders focused more on external relationships, the community members focused more on internal Port operations and dynamics. That is a little outside the scope of this project, but since some of their observations align with that of external stakeholders and might help inform the strategic communications and engagement plans, we wanted to share them.

As stated above, the people interviewed for this section were not sought out—rather, they heard about the project and requested to be interviewed. We accepted the requests and performed two individual interviews and one 7-person group session. In general, they seemed more informed about Port operations than most residents would be expected to be. They describe themselves as Port watchers, attend public meetings, read original source material, participate in listservs, have run for the office of Port commissioner, and have been involved in lawsuits against the Port. They were generally suspicious and skeptical about Port leadership and operations.

Since these are self-selected perspectives, it's important to note that they cannot be assumed to be indicative of the general public's level of knowledge or of public sentiment. That is not to say they are not; it is just to say that we don't know if any group of 10 volunteers are typical or atypical of a whole county. Should the Port want to develop a broader information/educational campaign about Port services or major projects, a broader public survey or focus groups is recommended. That would allow for better consideration of demographic differences such as location, age, gender, employment and education status.

Summary of findings:

- Some are skeptical about the Port's current role, position and value when it comes to economic development.
- While they acknowledge the Port solicits public feedback, they do not feel the process is genuine or the feedback is appropriately used.
- Like the other stakeholders, these community volunteers get their information (or experience the lack thereof) directly from the Port or through word-of-mouth.
- Frustrations were shared around the Port's seeming lack of engagement around broader community efforts.
- There's a desire to see the Port play a more active role in environmental restoration. *(Note: this could also indicate a need for the Port to communicate more about what it is doing).* Some individuals did understand that returning the lake to an estuary and restoring Budd Inlet is the work of decades.
- Questions and concerns were raised around transparency and basic good-government practices of the Port as a public agency.

COVER MEMO

Briefing Date/Time: January 17, 2023

Staff Contact/Title: Sam Gibboney, Executive Director
360-528-8001, samg@portolympia.com

Subject: Delegation of Authority Overview

Purpose: ☒ Information Only ☐ Decision Needed

Background/Overview:

RCW 53.12.270 provides authority to the Port Commission for delegation of powers to the Executive Director, and the Port Commission has adopted policy directives delegating administrative authority to the Executive Director and his/her designees for the purpose of expeditious administration of the Port.

The Port Commission has provided a master policy directive providing for the delegation of authority to the Executive Director or his or her designee for matters related to Port Policies. The Port Commission has from time to time found it necessary to amend and revise such directives due to changes in law, operations of the Port and updated best practices.

The Commission delegates the authority to the Executive Director to create procedures for the policies covered by the delegated authorities. In addition, the Commission delegates the authority to the Executive Director to create other administrative policies and procedures as deemed necessary to ensure proper conduct by the Port of Olympia employees.

Many Ports in Washington have adopted the best practice of an annual delegation of authority. This practice allows for the annual incorporation of policy changes made by the Commission in the previous year and a review of changes in other external standards and requirements.

Documents Attached:

- PowerPoint

Next Steps/Timeframe: *(Based on the Commission's recommendation, describe the next steps required in order to bring this item to conclusion. Include the time frame for each step.)*

Recommendations for changes and updates will be brought to the February work session for commission discussion and direction.



PORT of OLYMPIA
Serving All of Thurston County

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

January 17, 2023

SAM GIBBONEY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

1

Delegation of Authority Overview

- The Delegation of Authority
 - Administrative powers, duties & decision-making responsibilities
 - Commission delegates to Executive Director
 - Executive Director may further delegate

- RCW 53.12.270

"(1) The commission may delegate to the managing official of a port district such administrative powers and duties of the commission as it may deem proper for the efficient and proper management of port district operations. Any such delegation shall be authorized by appropriate resolution of the commission, which resolution must also establish guidelines and procedures for the managing official to follow.

(2) The commission shall establish, by resolution, policies to comply with RCW 39.04.280 that set forth the conditions by which competitive bidding requirements for public works contracts may be waived.

- Master policies & directives set by Commission via resolution
 - Incorporated into Port Policies & Procedures Manual

2



2

Delegation of Authority Overview

- Specific delegations of power and duties
 - Policy and procedural manuals
 - Monetary & budgetary directives
 - Personnel management, safety manuals, etc.
 - Clear span of authority & responsibility to designees
- Policies establish responsibility all administration & operations rests with the Executive Director.

3



3

Policies and Procedures Manual

- The Port Policies & Procedures Manual updated regularly
- Last revised June 2021- last comprehensive revision in 2019
- Organized by topic
 - 100 Executive Policy and Procedure
 - 200 Employment Practices-Personnel
 - 300 Leave & Holidays
 - 400 Hours of Work
 - 500 Memberships / Community Advertising and Promotion
 - 600 Expense Reimbursement / Travel
 - 700 Use of Port Resources
 - 800 Purchase and Expenditures
 - 900 Records/Public Disclosures
 - 1000 Contracts
 - 1100 Real Estate and Real Property
 - 1200 Financial Guidelines
 - 1300 Environmental

4



4

Updating the Policies and Procedures Manual

- Ports regularly make changes to their Policies & Procedures
 - Incorporate changes in state law, federal regulations & best practices
- Recommendations for updates in February/March
 - Previously adopted resolutions (2021 & 2022)
 - Recommended changes to best practices
- Broader overhaul of the Manual throughout the year

5



5

Questions

6



6