

Advancing the Conversation

on Strategic Planning for the Port of Port Townsend, 2008-09

Port at a 'critical crossroads'

This spring, the Port Commission initiated a process that will result in the preparation of a new Strategic Plan to help guide its decision-making and prioritize maintenance, improvement and expansion projects over the next 5 to 10 years.

The Port of Port Townsend is at a critical crossroads. The planning process is intended to help facilitate community discussions about the Port's mission and vision and provide a blueprint to address important policy issues and capital improvements needed to implement the community's vision. What kind of port should the Port of Port Townsend be? How is the Port of Port Townsend different from other ports found throughout the Puget Sound region? What is the Port's role in the larger community? What is our shared community vision for economic development? These are the kinds of questions we will be exploring as we work together with you to prepare the Strategic Plan.

On May 21, the Port and its consultant team conducted a "Community Kick-Off Meeting" at the Port Townsend Yacht Club to explain the purpose and context for the planning effort to key constituents and interested citizens. Over 70 citizens attended the meeting, along with Port Commissioners and senior staff. In June, eight separate "stakeholder group" meetings

were conducted to help the Port better understand the issues and concerns of key customer and community interest groups. Thanks to participant ideas shared in these meetings, the Port has been able to preliminarily identify a number of significant concerns to be dealt with during the planning process.

By early August, the Port Commission will have selected 12 to 16 people to serve on a broadly representative Community Advisory Committee (CAC). Over the summer and early autumn, the CAC will work closely with the "Port Team" (i.e., Port Commission, Port staff and consultants) to prepare a draft strategic plan for broader public review and comment during the fall and winter.



At a stakeholder meeting in June, a member of the Moorage Tenants Union explains a point to strategic planning consultant Bill Wise.

Timeline leads to adoption in '09

The Strategic Planning process is anticipated to begin in earnest with **Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings** starting in late summer, and occurring once every 3 to 4 weeks through the autumn. All CAC meetings will be open to the public.

In October or early November, once a draft Strategic Plan has been prepared for community review and comment, a series of **three public open houses** will be conducted (one each in Quilcene, Port Ludlow and Port Townsend).

After reviewing and considering the public input, the CAC and Port Team will develop a final draft Strategic Plan and conduct **public hearings** to accept formal testimony from citizens.

Although the precise schedule is subject to change, the Port Commission anticipates **adoption of the Strategic Plan** during the first few months of 2009. Check the Port's website (www.portoftpt.com) and this newsletter in the coming months to learn more about how you can become involved.

Strategic Planning Q&A

Didn't the Port already adopt a comprehensive scheme in 2003?

Yes, but a strategic plan is different from a comprehensive scheme. The latter is required under state law (RCW Chapter 53.20), but provides little real guidance concerning the types of economic development and capital improvements the Port should be pursuing. The Strategic Plan can provide that guidance, and may result in changes being made to the Comprehensive Scheme.

What will the final product of the strategic planning process be?

A written plan that provides a blueprint to address important policy issues and capital improvements needed to implement the community's vision. But the process is nearly as important as the product: development of the Strategic Plan will help the Port's leadership to actively listen to its constituents, and facilitate a dialogue with the community. In the end, both the *process* and the *product* will help the Port follow through on what it hears with a refocused mission, formalized policies and active implementation.

What authority does the Port have under the law?

The Port's authority and responsibility is spelled out in RCW Chapter 53.08. Ports are the one local government entity specifically empowered to promote economic development in the community. They do this by:

- Developing marine terminals and airports;
- Buying and improving property for lease;
- Providing air and water pollution control facilities;
- Building, operating, or leasing marinas and related facilities;
- Providing environmental enhancement, protection and public access; and
- Promoting tourism.

Look for additional opportunities to become involved and have your voice heard. We will be soliciting input from a broad spectrum of the community and will appreciate your comments!

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Stakeholder groups identified, queried

Stakeholder Groups

Groups that are directly or indirectly dependent upon Port operations and facilities, or that play an essential role in the economic health of the community:

- Local Governments
- Nonprofit Organizations
- Airport Users
- Port Employees
- Moorage Tenants
- Recreational Users
- Environmental Groups
- Marine Trades
- Port-Related Businesses
- Downtown Businesses & Local Chambers of Commerce

Early in the strategic planning process, Port Commissioners and senior staff recognized the critical need to involve groups that are either directly or indirectly dependent upon Port operations and facilities, or play an essential role in the economic health of the community. On May 7, the Commission ratified a process to solicit input from 10 different “stakeholder groups,” ranging from other local governments to marine trades and moorage tenants.

Representatives of each of these key groups were invited to attend eight separate stakeholder meetings, and were provided a list of questions to contemplate in preparation for the sessions. The questions were designed to facilitate discussion of the issues facing the Port community, and the top concerns of partici-

pants over the next 10 years. Oral and written input received during the stakeholder group process has enabled to Port Team to begin to identify a number of important topics that need to be addressed through the more formal planning process to come.

The individual stakeholder meetings were held over a two-week period between June 3 and June 13, with at least one Port Commissioner and senior Port staff member being present at each session to listen and observe. Participation in these group sessions varied widely, though many were very well attended, with anywhere from 15 to 30 citizens involved in most sessions.

Notes from each meeting are posted at www.portofpt.com; click on the red button labeled “Strategic Planning” on the home page.

Key issues identified at stakeholder meetings

A number of important issues and recurrent themes emerged from the June stakeholder meetings, including the following:

Fix Aging Infrastructure First – “Maintain what we have” as a first priority, and only afterwards consider the expansion of existing facilities or the development of new facilities.

Fairer Facilities Management & Budgeting – Dedicate revenues generated by particular Port facilities to the maintenance and operation of those facilities (e.g., moorage fees for maintenance of moorage facilities). Concern was expressed that revenues generated by one facility have been redirected to new projects or maintenance of other facilities, while the facilities that generated the revenue in the first place have not been adequately maintained (e.g., A/B Dock).

More Proactive Environmental Stewardship – The Port and community should become an acknowledged regional leader in environmental protection and stewardship.

Pursue Sustainable Economic Development Opportunities – Don’t pursue *all* forms of economic development, but promote “sustainable” economic development opportunities while safeguarding the community’s existing character and unique quality of life.

Improve & Maintain Communications, Public Relations & Customer Service – Increase opportunities for customer and citizen involvement and improve overall customer service. Numerous participants in these meetings expressed appreciation for the opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns to the Port, and feel they were heard.

Meet the local consulting team



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