

**PORT OF OLYMPIA COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING**

**March 25, 2002**

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**CALL TO ORDER**

President Van Schoorl called the meeting of March 25, 2002, to order at 5:30 p.m. at the City of Lacey Council Chambers. Commissioners Pottle and Telford were in attendance.

Staff in attendance were: Executive Director Nick Handy, Olympia Regional Airport Manager Doug Sandau, Finance Director George Fox, Deputy Director Wendy Holden, Marketing Director Kari Qvigstad, Marine Terminal Manager John Wolfe, Property Development Manager Heber Kennedy, Communications Manager Patti Grant, Administrative Assistant Lorie Watson, Swantown Harbormaster Bruce Marshall, and Program Assistant Teresa Olson.

Public in attendance were as follows. Representing *The Olympian* was reporter Scott Wyland. Representing KGY was reporter Ian Fox. Representing legal counsel was Mick Phillips. Others in attendance who signed the attendance sheet include: Gary Alexander, Mark Foutch, Gary Nomensen, Earl Pearson, Patte King, Mark Nilson, John Hurley, Lisa Cosmillo, Eric Gillett, John Sharrard, John Brecheen, Ashley Rupp, J. Kooiker, Jan Witt, Doug Baker, Denny Lensegrav, Harold Clark, Donald Brown, Marie Finn, Michael Grenko, Jerry Murphy, Ralph Osgood, Susan Kent, Jesse Norman, Lance Smith, Jun Jones, Ron Rants, Scott Sawyer, Cathy Hawkins, Russell Carstensen, Grant Fredricks, Christi Johnson, Linda Rubin, Tom Iovanne, Frank Dare, Robin Pollard, Jim O'Sullivan, Jim Snell, Julie Noice and Chris Lane.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The agenda was approved as submitted. President Van Schoorl requested that the order in which the agenda is presented be changed to accommodate tonight's audience. Since tonight's Public Hearing was advertised as starting at 5:30 p.m., he requested that the Airport Advisory be moved up first on the agenda for discussion. Motion was made by Commissioner Telford, seconded by Commissioner Pottle, to adjust the order of the agenda in order to meet the public's needs. Motion carried.

**ADVISORY CALENDAR**

**Big Sky Presentation and Public Hearing**

President Van Schoorl welcomed the audience and thanked everyone for their attendance. He encouraged the public to obtain copies of the handouts that were provided for tonight's meeting. These handouts included a Q&A sheet, an Executive Summary of Big Sky Airlines, and a Port Bulletin which features proposed air service at the Olympia Regional Airport. He stated that approximately 1400 Port Bulletin's were mailed to the public which announced tonight's Public Hearing.

President Van Schoorl introduced a pre-recorded, 10-minute PowerPoint presentation which gave a complete history of the Olympia Regional Airport. He then introduced tonight's panel which consists of Deputy Director Wendy Holden; Airport Manager Doug Sandau; and Mark Sixel of Sixel Consulting.

The panel gave a PowerPoint presentation and indicated the Port of Olympia has been actively recruiting airlines to resume regular commercial air service at the Olympia Regional Airport (ORA) for several years. Now, Big Sky Airlines, a 20-year regional carrier operating 26 routes in eight states, is actively considering routes to Spokane and Portland.

The Port has done a lot of market research on the South Sound community's air service needs and habits. In addition, the Port has learned a great deal about market conditions and the kind of airline that would provide a good business fit for area travelers. Ms. Holden indicated that the public hearing to take place tonight would:

- Confirm our understanding of the market and those needs and requirements,
- Describe the Port role in supporting the return of air service to Olympia Regional Airport, and;
- Propose a solution to benefit area travelers and businesses using Big Sky Airlines at the Port facilities.

The unanswered question is whether the traveling public wants air service at Olympia Regional Airport, and will use it. The public hearing is focused on that question.

Ms. Holden encouraged the public to access the Port's website at [www.portolympia.com](http://www.portolympia.com) and fill out the air service survey which would give the Port Commission an indication of how the public feels about bringing scheduled air service back to Olympia.

President Van Schoorl also encouraged the public to contact the Port via email, letters, and by making public comment at tonight's meeting. He urged attendees to use the comment cards provided if anyone felt uncomfortable addressing the Commission in person. President Van Schoorl also encouraged people to fill out the survey on the Port's website.

Before public testimony began, President Van Schoorl asked Mr. Doug Sandau to address the concern of possible increased noise at the airport.

Mr. Sandau stated that the airplanes used by Big Sky Airlines consist of the Swearingen SW-4 Metro liner, a twin-engine turboprop aircraft. He said the airplane is relatively quiet and the noise footprint would remain the same as under current conditions. Mr. Sandau stated the majority of flights will take place during daylight hours with reduced flights on weekends. He said there would be an eight to ten percent increase in air traffic.

#### **Public Comment:**

**Gary Alexander, Washington State Representative**, spoke on behalf of fellow legislators and submitted a letter of support that strongly urged the Commission to obtain a new commercial air service for Thurston County. He stated that with the increasing traffic congestion in both North-South and East-West vehicle usage, the availability of commercial air service to high destination points such as Seattle, Spokane, and Portland, would be both time-efficient and budget-friendly. He also stated that he was convinced that a convenient air service to and from Olympia would be used frequently by legislators, lobbyists, and interested citizens, not only during the busy legislative session, but also throughout the year.

**Gary Nomenson, President of Thurston County Economic Development Council (EDC)**, stated that the EDC supports the Port of Olympia's efforts to secure commuter air transportation for our community. He listed all the amenities for having a convenient air service at the Olympia Regional Airport, i.e., convenient parking, no congestion on highways, easy drive, etc., and stated the community needs to change their travel habits and use the air service out of Olympia. He added that the EDC has committed to supporting community efforts to make Big Sky Airlines successful.

**Patte King, Tumwater resident**, stated her objection to any proposed air service at the Olympia Regional Airport. Ms. King lives two miles from the airport and stated that no one is speaking for the residents who live near the airport. She said her neighbors were not directly notified of the hearing and with the amount of property taxes she currently pays, she would consider moving out of Tumwater if air service were approved. She added that she would not even move to Olympia. Ms. King is employed by state government and claims that state employees did not use air service out of Olympia in the past and will not

do so now.

**Jerry Murphy, President, Tumwater Chamber of Commerce,** stated his support on behalf of the Tumwater Chamber for proposed air service. He said he took an informal poll among the members and several people replied that they would use this service as many as 25 times a year. Mr. Murphy stated the Chamber values the Olympia Regional Airport and wants to be a part of its success.

**Mark Foutch, City of Olympia Mayor Pro-Tem,** presented a letter in support of proposed air service on behalf of Mayor Stan Biles. He said the Olympia City Council unanimously supports the Port Commission in exploring opportunities with Big Sky Airlines. The City Council believes that from both a convenience and business standpoint, the addition of regularly scheduled air service at the Olympia Regional Airport would be of great benefit to the community.

**Jan Witt, Olympia resident,** spoke in opposition to any air service at the Olympia Regional Airport. Ms. Witt lives four miles from the airport and stated her concern about the increase in air traffic. She also stated her concern regarding energy shortages and the increase in fuel supplies that would be necessary by any airlines. She does not want the Commission to use taxpayers' dollars to facilitate this process. Ms. Witt does not want the Governor to sign any Executive Order mandating state employees to use the service. She believes state employees should be able to choose on their own whether or not they would use the air service. Ms. Witt said the return of air service should be put to the vote of the public before any decision is made.

**Doug Baker, City Administrator, Tumwater,** stated his support on behalf of the Tumwater City Council. He urged the Commission to keep the cost of airline tickets affordable. Mr. Baker said that scheduled air service would be excellent for the citizens of Thurston County.

**Denny Lensegrav, Puget Sound Energy (PSE),** stated Puget Sound Energy's support for the proposed air service. He explained that PSE's two electrical distribution systems have enough capacity to serve both the NewMarket Industrial Campus and the Olympia Regional Airport. He urged the Commission's support for proposed air service.

**Harold Clark, Olympia resident,** stated he was a 35-year veteran of airports and said he's always amazed at how people complain about airports when they choose to live right next to one. He said most people always say it's a good idea to have an air service, but they would not use it. Mr. Clark stated his concern about the Olympia weather and whether or not planes would be able to take off or land. He also asked what would happen to the state agency planes (Department of Natural Resources and the State Patrol) if the state provides a contract – would Governor Locke fly Big Sky Airlines instead? Mr. Clark also mentioned the reduction in travel for state government and said such an order could cause problems for any airline.

**Marie Finn, Tumwater resident,** stated her opposition to the proposed air service. She said she was not notified by the Port of tonight's hearing. Ms. Finn stated her concern about the hours that planes would fly and requested no early morning or late evening flights. She said her cell phone usage is always interrupted whenever a plane flies over her house. Ms. Finn is concerned about increased traffic congestion on all roads surrounding the airport and urged the Commission to take into consideration the quality of life before making any decision.

**Susan Kent, President, Olympia-Thurston County Chamber of Commerce,** stated her support on behalf of the Chamber. She said the Chamber believes the convenience, economic benefit, reduction in non-productive hours, and ability to avoid the stressful, congested I-5 drive to SeaTac or Portland by having air service from Olympia are strong business factors that will make Big Sky successful. Ms. Kent also serves as Marketing Director for Capital Medical Center (CMC), the third largest private employer in the area and said CMC is also very supportive. She said air service would be very helpful to management at CMC. Ms. Kent's home is located within the flight pattern, approximately five miles from the airport, and said that is no problem because time is more valuable and she would like to see air service return to

the Olympia Regional Airport.

**Lance Smith, Olympia resident,** stated he hasn't heard a strong business case on this issue. He stressed the importance of everyone understanding what is at stake and urged the Commission to put this to a vote of the people. Mr. Smith stated his concern for the quality of life and what the taxpayers will experience financially. He urged the Commission to do more work on this issue.

**Ron Rants, President, Olympia Roundtable,** stated that the Olympia Roundtable consists of approximately 25 members of the Olympia business community. The Roundtable fully supports the concept of air service returning to the Olympia Regional Airport. He stated that such service would promote economic vitality to the area and encouraged the Commission's support of this issue.

**Russell Carstensen, Olympia resident,** spoke in favor of the concept of air service at the Olympia Regional Airport, but added that the cost would have to be competitive. Mr. Carstensen works for the National Association of Radio & Telecommunication Engineers and travels a lot. He said it costs him \$80.00 to drive to SeaTac and park, and in order for him to use the Olympia service, the cost is very important. Also, he said it is very important that the air service have the ability to check luggage all the way through to final destinations.

**Grant Fredricks, Deputy Director, Washington State Department of General Administration,** spoke in favor of bringing air service to the Olympia community and reported that approximately 8,000 Olympia-based travelers flew from Seattle to Spokane last year. He stated that Olympia air service would save state employees valuable travel time and reduce state travel costs. Mr. Fredricks listed three things the state can do if Big Sky commits to Olympia air service. These include: 1) immediately negotiate city pair contracts for Olympia-Spokane and Olympia-Portland; 2) promote this new travel option within the Governor's Executive Cabinet and to other state agencies; and 3) work close with the Port and Big Sky to document that this travel option will produce real time and cost savings and then highlight these savings on the State's "Best Practice" website. The Office of Financial Management strongly encourages all state agencies to follow these Best Practices and monitors adoption.

**Christy Johnson, Tumwater resident,** spoke in opposition and stated there are a lot of unanswered questions. She would like the Port to define what is involved in this process and questioned how much this air service will cost the taxpayers, especially at a time when Intercity Transit's budget is being cut.

**Linda Rubin, Olympia resident,** spoke in opposition of the proposed air service and said such service would have detrimental effects to the community. Ms. Rubin lives four miles from the airport and is concerned about air pollution and noise. She stated that the Port is not monitoring these problems and should revisit the Airport Master Plan because the way Tumwater is growing, the airport is located in the middle of the city. Ms. Rubin is concerned about taxpayer dollars being used to benefit a small number of people. She said she is aware of government and travel cutbacks and now is not the time for government to be catering to private business.

**Tom Iovanne, President, Visitors & Convention Bureau,** spoke in favor of bringing air service to the area. Mr. Iovanne also serves as Executive Director of the Washington Center for Performing Arts and stated that many performing groups would use this service rather than flying into SeaTac and spending the night in Seattle so they won't miss their flight. He said that different groups would use the service 25-30 times a year and would take advantage of an Olympia-based airline. In reference to an earlier comment about noise pollution, Mr. Iovanne stated that I-5 is just as noisy.

**Frank Dare, Olympia resident,** stated several questions that need to be answered. These questions include: Are gates available at the Portland airport? Will parking have to be expanded? What is this really going to cost the taxpayers? What is the length of the contract with Big Sky? What expansion plans does Big Sky have? Will the Port need to upgrade the airport? He added that the airplane used by Big Sky is a good airplane and is not noisy; however, he added that bringing air service to the Olympia area should be put to the vote of the public.

**Robin Pollard, Director, Economic Development Division, Office of Trade & Economic Development,** spoke in favor of air service returning to Olympia and gave a statewide perspective on why it is so important. She stated that in these severe economic times, air service would be beneficial for economic development in the area. Ms. Pollard works with Site Selectors throughout the country and air service is a vital part in any business relocating here. She stated that Big Sky Airlines would serve as a vital partner and would also be an asset for tourism.

**Jim O'Sullivan, Olympia resident,** spoke in favor of air service returning to the Olympia Regional Airport. He has lived in the area for 32 years and has always wondered why there is no air service. Mr. O'Sullivan and his family make at least six trips a year to Spokane and he said it would be a great cost savings for him. He stated that the Port Commission, as elected officials, would make the right decision

**Earl Pearson, Tumwater resident,** owns and operates Pearson Air, a current tenant at the Olympia Regional Airport and spoke in favor of air service returning to the Olympia Regional Airport. In reference to earlier comments about noise, he explained that take-offs take less than a minute. He stated that all those people who speak against air service should consider the need in case they have an emergency of a loved one. It's very important to have the capability of air service for emergency medical reasons. Mr. Pearson said air service will bring revenue to the community and all taxes will be paid by the users. As far as pollution is concerned, he stated I-5 creates more pollution than aircraft.

**Donald Brown, Owner of Deer Creek Awards and President-Elect of the Olympia Thurston Chamber of Commerce,** spoke in favor of air service. He stated he is a resident of Mason County and takes 40-50 trips to SeaTac per year. Mr. Brown said he can attest that it takes four to five hours to drive to SeaTac and he would much rather fly out of Olympia.

**Jessie Norman, Tumwater resident,** stated that she personally did not receive any notice for tonight's hearing and she is concerned about noise that could occur at the Olympia Regional Airport. She said that when planes go overhead, her pictures shake on her walls. She asked the Commission to consider the quality of life and questioned why the meeting wasn't held in Tumwater. She also requested that no state government mandate be given to use the service.

**Mark Nilson, Auburn resident,** stated he is an interested party for air service and used to operate an air service out of Olympia and currently operates airline service in Florida. He said no airline operates on a 24/7 schedule – they couldn't afford to do such a schedule. Mr. Nilson also explained that ADAP funds (tax on tickets) are paid by the people who order the tickets. He added that if Big Sky is profitable, they would stay. If they are not, they will leave.

This concluded the end of Public Comment. President Van Schoorl thanked everyone for their comments and urged the TCTV audience to submit their views in writing, via letters or email, or by telephone to Port staff. He urged everyone to take part in the Port's website air service survey so the Commission would have a read on what the public's interest is regarding air service at the Olympia Regional Airport.

### **Tumwater Towne Center Study Advisory**

Mr. Nick Handy presented the Commission with an advisory on the Tumwater Towne Center. He indicated that the City of Tumwater is inquiring of the Port's interest in share-costing a consultant study on development of the Tumwater Towne Center.

The City's request is based upon the fact that the Port owns much of the land to be developed for the Tumwater Towne Center and the City and Port have partnered on master planning in the past on this project.

The consultant's study would propose design features for street cross sections, create some planned and future visual images of the Towne Center, and develop models for internal street circulation.

Port staff has been advocating for this type of study for some time. Benefits from the study would include the following:

- **Port Revenues.** Development of the Tumwater Towne Center will offer substantial revenues to the Port.
- **Transportation System.** Creating a transportation system will assist the Port and the City to create development strategies.
- **Marketing.** Developing visual representations of the Towne Center would assist the Port in marketing these properties.
- **Active Voice.** Participation in funding the study would give the Port an active voice in the planning exercise.
- **Port City Partnership.** Jointly participating in this process would further strengthen the Port and City partnership.

For this kind of economic development study, the Port has traditionally used funds from the Port EDC. The Port EDC fund balance is approximately \$57,000 at this time. This money may only be authorized, however, by the Port EDC so convening the Port EDC for this purpose would be required to authorize an expenditure from this source.

Ralph Osgood, Mayor of Tumwater, addressed the Commission and stated the City of Tumwater and the Port need to cohesively work together in creating the Tumwater Towne Center. He stated everyone has one shot at doing it right and that sporadic planning cannot take place. Mayor Osgood stated that he wants to maintain a good relationship with the Port and urged the Commission's partnership.

President Van Schoorl commented that the amount of the Port's investment is relatively small. Commissioner Pottle stated that this item is advisory only and requested that a representative from the City of Tumwater be available at the Port Commission meeting when this item is voted upon for action.

President Van Schoorl requested Executive Director Nick Handy to call a meeting of the Port's Economic Development Corporation within the next two to three weeks.

## **COMMISSIONERS REPORTS**

Due to a time constraint, no Commissioners reports were presented.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT**

Due to a time constraint, no Executive Director report was presented.

## **CONSENT CALENDAR**

The Consent Calendar was unanimously approved as follows.

**Minutes.** The minutes from the March 11, 2002 meeting was unanimously approved as presented.

**Capital Expenditure Approval.** The payment to RCI Environmental for the Cascade Pole project in the amount of \$50,191.29 was unanimously approved.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. John Brecheen, a retired, 28-year homeowner in Thurston County, addressed the Commission and expressed his concern about a recent article in *The Olympian* which stated that the Port paid \$60,000 to Mr. Doug Tobin for the carving of a totem pole which is scheduled to be placed within the newly

landscaped Port Plaza. According to recent newspaper articles, Mr. Tobin has a criminal record and was ordered to serve a 10-year sentence which was reduced to six. Mr. Tobin has just recently been arrested in connection with illegal harvesting of shellfish on Squaxin Tribal tidelands. Mr. Brecheen strongly objected to any recognition of Mr. Tobin's work and urged the Commission to abandon all plans to erect the totem pole on the Port Plaza. He will be submitting a formal letter of request to the Commission later this week.

President Van Schoorl stated that the Commission was aware of Mr. Tobin's criminal record and will be having further discussions with the Squaxin Tribe and Port staff.

**ADJOURNMENT**

President Van Schoorl adjourned the meeting of March 25, 2002 at 8:04 p.m. He announced the next meeting would be held at the TCTV Studio on April 8, 2002.

PORT OF OLYMPIA COMMISSION

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President

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Vice President

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Secretary-Treasurer