COLUMBIA PORT COMMISSION December 21,2023

MINUTES MEETING:

COMMISSIONERS: Darron McGuffee, Bruce Frazier, Monty Adams, Jr. Charles Hearns, and Mark McKee

Attendees: Richard Smith, Terral

PORT DIRECTOR: GREG RICHARDSON

Meeting was called to order at 11:30 by Darron McGuffee at the Police Jury Meeting Room in the Caldwell Parish Courthouse.

READING OF THE MINUTES, **motion was made by Charles Hearns, and seconded by Bruce Frazier to adopt the minutes.**

READING OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT**, motion was made by Mark Mckee, and seconded by Monty Adams to accept the bank statements, and the motion passed.**

**Adoption of FY2024 Budget** Greg provided the final budget for FY2024, Greg reviewed the budget, stated that the notification in the Caldwell Watchman had been performed and the budget was ready for adoption. **Motion was made by Mark McKee to adopt the FY2024 budget, second was made by Monty Adams Jr. motion passed.**

ITEMS DISCUSSED DURING MEETING Greg informed the Commission of activities since last port meeting:

* Greg informed the Commissioners that the Columbia Port Commission was awarded an EDA Disaster Supplemental Grant of $2,250,000 for our FY2023 Emergency Staging Area application. The grant will assist the port with providing support to the community during natural disasters. The total cost of the project is $2,815,000 which represents $2,250,000 from EDA, $ 250,000 from La DOTD PPP, and $315,000 from the Port. The Emergency Staging Area will include a 5-acre aggregate laydown yard, office trailer, Bathroom trailer, 8000 sq ft metal building, mobile dock, natural gas generator, 2 storage containers, 2 office trailer hookup, and associated utilities. The proposed location of the ESA is adjacent to the stormwater retention pond. Greg anticipates taking the rest of the year to get the paperwork and bid documents prepared with construction activities starting in January 2025.
* Greg informed the Commissioners that the Columbia Port Commission was awarded a DRA grant of $1,000,000 to assist with the construction of the Railroad spur at the Port. These funds are crucial to the implementation of the construction of the railspur since they represent the required match for LaDOTD PPP funds. We are still waiting on notification of our RTEPF grant application which is a component of the railspur project. The Port did not receive our PIDP grant application which was the same scope of work as the RTEPF. The Port plans to start the railspur as soon as possible (FY2024) after notification of the remaining grant applications.
* Greg informed the Commissioners that our Thriving Communities grant application was advanced to the second round, which is promising. Greg stated that he was going to press LaDOTD, LaDED, and elected officials to submit letter of support to assist with strengthen our efforts. Greg reminded the board, that the Thriving Communities grant was not a monetary award and is a three-year program to support the community with capacity building. Last year only 64 projects were selected, so being selected is competitive however very few communities can boast of receiving $38.2 million in state and federal funds within an 18-month period. Greg believes our application is strong and has a good chance of success (70/30)
* Greg discussed LCRED application to NELA, the port is requesting $850,000 to support all of our grant implementation. Monty Adams Sr and the industrial board has been working tirelessly to support the port with this effort. If successful, the industrial board has indicated it would be willing to help with the 10% match. Ours was the only application submitted, however with the delays due to reorganization of NELA, we can assume that others will be allowed to apply prior to the funds being awarded. Greg feels confident we will at least get a significant portion of the request maybe $500,000.
* Greg presented the information from the proposed Audit firm of Kolder, Slaven, & Company. Greg also stated they came highly recommended by CLPA and Greg was impressed with the discussion on various aspects of the audit process, the importance of completing the audit on time, and the ability to rotate auditors every 4 to 5 years. Greg recommended that the board hire them. **Motion was made by Mark McKee, to hire Kolder, Slaven, & Company as the Port’s auditors, and approved Darron McGuffee to sign the appropriate documents, seconded by Monty Adams, Jr. motion passed.**
* Greg provided the commissioners the letter they had requested from progressive pertaining to our agreement to release a partial retainage on work completed. Greg informed the commissioners that the check was mailed after the letter was received.
* Greg discussed the purchasing of the options to purchase from LGF for the Reynolds property, Greg also informed the board that at this time the Port was not able to purchase the easement for the Carr property from LGF, due to the fact that LGF only holds a lease not an easement.
* LGF’s rent of $160,000 which is due by December 31,2023, Greg request that LGF be allowed to pay $120,000 of the rent due by December 31,2023 and the remaining $40,000 be paid within 6 months (July 1, 2024). **Motion was made by Mark McKee seconded by Monty Adams, Jr to allow LGF additional time to pay their rent, motion passed.** The Commissioners request I get a letter from LGF stating they understand the terms of the delayed rent payment.
* Greg discussed desire to pursue the modification of our Charter stating he would work through Sen. Womack about this matter.
* Greg also stated that he and the industrial board was working on developing a TIF evaluation committee to determine the potential of a TIF to assist the Port with generating needed funding.
* Greg went over all outstanding invoices, stated his concern over the legal fees associated with working with LGF over purchase options, **Motion was made by Mark McKee and seconded by Monty Adams to pay all outstanding bills, motion passed.**
* Greg gave update on Port Tenants
* Greg relayed the current status of the Riverton Campground Road Project, emphasizing that every possible effort has been made to engage Union Pacific to facilitate the project’s completion. The Port is currently awaiting a response from Union Pacific. Greg asked Richard Smith with terral, if Terral would mind maintaining Riverton Campground Road while the project is delayed, specifically the area adjacent to the railroad crossing, Richards stated the would be willing to do what was necessary as long as the Port agreed to pay for whatever materials were used. **Motion was made by Mark McKee, to have Terral maintain the road seconded by Monty Adams jr motion passed.**
* Greg gave update on awarded grants
  + DRA – Additional funds have been requested from DRA to address change orders related to the rail crossing still waiting notification.
  + Earmark – The Port is currently awaiting approval from congress for the earmark grant, which is currently tied up in the congressional budget process.
  + RAISE – working on getting agreement signed with FHWA, LaDOTD is construction schedule is a problem. Greg also gave a report about his speech to the national coalition on truck parking.
  + DHS PSPG - We need to start this project in FY 2024, Greg needs to meet with Tensas Levee board and adjacent landowners to discuss fence placement.
  + USDA Rural Development – is complete and has been closed out
  + LaDOTD PPP – everything running smooth waiting on Union Pacific to complete road.
  + Capital Outlay -- the port was able to use some the engineering from Priority one but the majority of the funds need to be moved up so construction of the railspur can start.
* Greg gave update on grants we are still waiting on award notification:
  + Thriving Communities
  + RTEPF – $ 10 million award announcements should be in January
  + LaCRED -- $850,000
  + Capital Outlay - $2 railroad, $3 expansion, will be May 2024.
* Greg gave update on work in progress grant applications
  + Evaluating a DOE Grip application to assist LGF with transmission line
  + Evaluating an EPA Clean Port Program application for Strategic Planning Statewide
  + Prepare for FY2025 CFP – Solar farm potential

Greg used the remaining 40 minutes of the meeting to have those board members which had not completed their Sexual Harassment Training to watch the program as he conducted the meeting. Those in attendance were Darron, Bruce, Charles and Monty. Course was completed and certificates were issued.

Greg informed the commissioners that they needed to update the Personal Financial Disclosure statements prior to next meeting.

**Motion was made by Charles Hearns to adjourn the meeting second by Mark McKee motion passed meeting was adjourned.**