COLUMBIA PORT COMMISSION August 24,2023

MINUTES MEETING:

COMMISSIONERS: Darron McGuffee, Bruce Frazier, and Charles Hearns

PORT DIRECTOR: GREG RICHARDSON

Meeting was called to order 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 Charles Hearns, and seconded by Bruce Frazier to accept the bank statements motion passed.** Greg gave financial report and discussed cash flow.

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

* Greg gave a presentation for the proposed fy2023 EDA Disaster Supplemental Grant Application for a Emergency Staging Area at the Port. The ESA would be used to support emergency crews when working natural disasters in the region as well as be available for use by the Port and our Tenants during construction project. The ESA will be constructed on 15 acres of port property the estimated total cost of the project is $2.8 million with $2.3 million EDA Federal Funding and Non-federal Match being $250,000 LaDOTD PPP and $315,000 Port. The Facility will include a 5-acre aggregate yard, with a Resource Management Center which includes: 8000sq.ft. Response Nexus Hanger, 1440 Sq. Ft Modular Operation Center, 1250 sq.ft. Responder’s Ready Center, 2 Response Resource Bins, 2 mobile Command trailer Hookups, 1 Mobile loading dock, 1 natural gas generator. **Motion was made by Charles Hearns and Seconded by Bruce Frazier to submit the grant application.** Motion passed.
* Greg discussed meeting with Caldwell Parish Industrial Board to discuss the formation of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District Evaluation Committee. The Evaluation committee chaired by the Industrial board and members would be made up from various local entities. Greg gave an overview of the merits of a TIF for the Port and level of effort would be required secure a TIF. The board agreed that Greg would continue to serve a member of the TIF Evaluation Committee representing the Port. Steve May was appointed by the CPID as Chairman of the committee.
* Greg gave update on Audit, and recommended that the board evaluate replacing our Auditors. The recommendation of replacing the auditors was rooted in the fact that we have used the same auditors for a significant period of time and its good policy change auditors every 5 to 8 years. Greg pointed out the he believed that our Auditors have taken on too much work and not providing the level of service required or need for the Port. For the Second year in a row the Auditors due to no reason than their own have caused the Port audit reports to be filed late. On both occasions these filing required letters from the State of Louisiana, placing the port in noncompliance with potential consequences to the Port receiving reimbursements from the state. The anticipated $34.5 million in State and Federal Funds to support infrastructure projects emphasizes the importance of the Port to address identified weaknesses.
* Greg discussed another area of weakness which need to be addressed and proposed a solution. Greg presented a proposal for consulting services of Stephanie Ryland to assist the Port with creating a policy manual, provide preparation of the documentation for annual audit and assist with developing project administration in compliance with state and federal grant procedures. Greg requested the support to prepare for the upcoming grants and provided additional information about Ms. Ryland’s background. Greg is confident with Ms. Ryland’s support the Port will be in a better position to implement the upcoming awarded grants. The board reviewed the Consulting Service Proposal. **Bruce Frazier made a motion to hire Ms. Ryland, second by Charles Hearns, motion passed.** Ms. Ryland contract is for 12 months at $35 per hour 30 hours per month. She will be paid $35 per hour for each hour worked with a maximum of 30 hours unless approved by the Port Director.
* Greg outlined how the Port Office was developing utilizing the assembled supporting cast of Ms. Ryland - office administration, Ms. Hartt – accounting , Ms. Finch - grant management, Gary Lagrange Port Operations, and BHA – consulting engineers. The utilization of consultants to assist with the Port’s rapid growth and development is logical.
* Greg gave update of the meeting with DOTD-FHWA in Baton Rouge. Greg and Gary attended an informal meeting to discuss the RAISE grant award. The outcomes of the meeting DOT suggested that we mail a letter to LaDOTD requesting them to be the Direct Recipient of the Grant and that the Port would be a Sub-recipient. DOT also stated that the Port would not be able to purchase the property until an agreement is signed with the federal government which will require the completion of a NEPA study on the proposed property. The time frame is highly unlikely before April 2024. The removal of the Administration building from the RAISE grant is an issue for the Port and will have to be addressed in the formal Kick-off Meeting. DOT stated it was unusual for all of the funds requested to be awarded with one component removed from the award. Very good meeting was glad that Gary Lagrange was able to attend and provide support and a second set of ears. Greg has prepared and submitted letter from LaDOTD to be the Direct Recipient for the Project.
* Greg did not have enough time and energy to submit the RURAL and INFRA grant application.
* Greg gave update on construction of RC Road.
* Greg presented board with Change Order No. 4 for RC Road. The change order was for increases associated with
  + Items 12 Class II Base Course, the additional base which was necessary between US165 and the Rail Road track.
  + Item 16 Asphalt Concrete, the additional Tons were due to miscalculations by the engineer on volumes associated with the turning lanes.
  + Item 30 Plastic Pavement Striping – 4” width, required by the LaDOTD manual for road markings
  + and Item 32 Plastic Pavement Striping – Broken Line required by the LaDOTD manual for road markings.
* Greg provided documentations authorizing BHA to prepare and submit our capital outlay request for 2024.
* Greg provided documentation requesting reimbursement from LaDOTD PPP No.6
* Greg provided request to NELA for $500,000 for assistance with implementing our $34.5 million dollars of Federal and State Grants awarded to the Port. The new program is a LED program Louisiana Competes Reginal Economic Development (LaCRED), which is a $1,000,000 grant to support project in the 10 parish NELA region. The Port requested support to assist with interest payments for Grant Anticipation Loans, funds for Grant Management and Engineering Services, as well as funds to provide Federal Grant Match.
* Greg showed the Port Commission our check from LaDOTD which reimbursed funds paid for the construction of RC ROAD. With this payment the port’s bond has been repaid with a remaining outstanding balance of $417,773.16.
* Greg discussed resignation of our attorney Harper Wilkins along with requested supportive data which verified the issues raised last meeting between Greg and LGF pertaining to the storage of carbon created from off-site sources. Greg stated that we need to find an attorney that specializes in Ports and contracts.
* Greg informed board about upcoming FEMA Fundamentals of Grant Management Class and the status of the PSGP, security fencing. As well as DOT request that we attend a Sub Recipient Grant Training Class in Lake Charles in October.
* Greg reviewed all outstanding invoices, **Motion was made by Charles Hearns to pay all outstanding invoices, Bruce Frazier second motion,** motion passed.

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