COLUMBIA PORT COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
Date: December 19, 2024
Location: Caldwell Parish Library Meeting Room

Commissioners Present:

* Darron McGuffee Robert Frazier
* Charles Hearns
* Mark McKee

Port Director: Guest

* Greg Richardson Bob Meredith, LGF

1. Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 11:30 AM by Chairman Darron McGuffee.

2. Adoption of Previous Meeting Minutes:

A motion was made by Mark Mckee and seconded by Charles Hearns to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Financial Report:

The financial statements for the period were presented for both checking accounts. A motion to accept the bank statements was made by Charles Hearns, seconded by Bruce Frazier, and passed unanimously.

4. Items Discussed:

4.1 Lease Rent - Louisiana Green Fuels

Bob Meredith addressed the commissioners, requesting a modification to Louisiana Green Fuels (LGF) lease payment terms. He proposed changing the current annual payment of $160,000, due on December 31 of the prior year, to quarterly payments of $40,000 each, due on March 31, June 30, September 30, and December 31. LGF sought only to adjust the payment schedule, keeping the total annual amount unchanged. After presenting the rationale for this change, the commissioners discussed the matter, with Greg Richardson providing attorney recommendations. The commissioners unanimously agreed to the proposed modification and signed the necessary documents to amend the lease accordingly.

**Resolution was made to modify LGF lease, changing the payment structure from a lump sum annual payment to quarterly installments. The total lease amount remained unchanged, only the payment schedule was adjusted, Resolution was made by Charles Hearns, seconded by Mark Mckee and unanimously approved. motion passed.**

Bob provided the commissioners with a candid update on the project's progress, highlighting two key issues:

1. **Carbon Sequestration Well Permits**: LGF has submitted permit applications to DENR and is optimistic that they will be approved by the end of the year.
2. **DOE Loan**: LGF is actively working on securing a DOE loan, a complex process requiring both significant funding and specific pre-engineering work before approval.

Bob noted that the incoming administration of President-elect Trump could affect federal agency operations, potentially causing delays in the loan process. However, LGF does not view this as a significant obstacle to achieving their funding goals.

The commissioners engaged in a broader discussion with Bob, including efforts to raise additional funds. Bob shared that Sumitomo is collaborating with LGF to identify new partners to secure Final Investment Decision (FID) completion.

4.2 Annual Meeting – Greg provided an update on the success of the recent annual meeting, which was well attended and widely regarded as a significant achievement. The presence of local, state, and federal elected officials, as well as representatives from agencies that had provided funding to the Port over the past year, underscored the collective commitment of the Port and the community to advancing its projects.

The commissioners discussed the possibility of holding semi-annual meetings to further enhance communication and engagement.

The catering invoice for the event was presented and approved for payment.

**Resolution was made to donate/pay the Caldwell Parish Library $600 for use of their facilities for the upcoming year to host our monthly meeting on the 3rd Thursday of each month, by Bruce Frazier and seconded by Mark Mckee, motion passed.**

4.3 Port Director's Updates:

* CV Power Tech Solar Manufacturing Facility:
Greg informed the Port Commissioners that the Joint Transportation Committee of the Louisiana Legislature had officially confirmed the LaDOTD PPP’s recommendation to award the POWER to the Port Grant. He noted that the associated paperwork could take until March to finalize, with funds expected to become available in approximately five years, by 2030 at the earliest. This grant will provide critical funding for the construction and equipment procurement of CV PowerTech’s solar manufacturing facility, as well as the installation of a 4 MW solar farm to supply clean energy for both CV PowerTech and the Port.
* LaDOTD PPP Grant Application:
Awarded
* Louisiana Green Fuels (LGF) Project Update:
See above.
* RAISE Grant for Truck Parking Facility (TPF):
The Port has utilized the NEPA information provided by Geosyntec, BHA, and Eagle and is currently collaborating with LaDOTD to secure a Categorical Exclusion (CE) for the project. Greg, along with the attorney, has completed all necessary documentation for the purchase of the Reynolds property. The closing is scheduled for December 26 at Mixon Carrol Law Office. Greg also outlined the appraisal process and confirmed the agreed purchase price of $1,243,775 for the Reynolds estate.

**Resolution was presented to purchase the Reynolds Property and authorizing Darron McGuffee to sign on behalf of the Columbia Port Commission by Mark Mckee, seconded by Charles Hearns, motion passed with one member absent Monty Adams, Jr. (Who had been made aware of the resolution and was in favor of the purchase, just unable to attend the meeting to vote).**

* Rail Project:
BHA has contracted Hatch, LGF’s design engineer, to finalize the rail spur design for submission to Union Pacific, the design submittal should be completed during the first quarter of 2025.
* MARAD Dock Project:
Since Geosyntec has substantially completed the NEPA for the TPF, Greg has requested BHA to contract with Geosyntec to assist with developing the NEPA for the Dock project.
* EDA Grant & Engineering Services:
James Mixon has completed the title opinion for the Port's existing property. The document has been forwarded to the Port's attorney for review, signature, and subsequent submission to the EDA. Once the EDA approves the submittals, the Port will be authorized to issue a work order for BHA to design and develop the bid package for the Emergency Staging Area. The Port anticipates this process will be completed by early summer 2025.
* Riverton Campground Road:
BHA has confirmed that all Union Pacific permits for the Riverton Campground Road rail crossing and culvert extension have been secured. With the necessary approvals in place, the rail crossing portion of the project is ready to proceed. Work is anticipated to begin in the first quarter of 2025.
* Security Fence Project:
Fencing Unlimited has successfully completed the assigned work for Phase I of the fence installation, with certain portions deferred to Phase II. Greg expressed satisfaction with their performance and provided copies of the approved change orders and the invoice to officially close out Phase I. He also noted that the Port has received $250,000 in matching funds for the DHS project from Grow NELA. The remaining 10% match, totaling $25,000, will be requested from the Industrial Board early next year.
* State Infrastructure Bank Greg provided an update on his efforts to assist the Office of Rural Development in evaluating the potential benefits of establishing a State Infrastructure Bank. This initiative could offer low-interest funding to support infrastructure projects at the Port, enhancing its capacity for future developments.
* Erroneous Letter from FHL Bank in Dallas Texas, Greg reported receiving an irrevocable standby letter of credit for $110,000 from FHL Bank in Dallas, Texas, which had been sent to Caldwell Bank. The Port was unable to identify any connection between its activities and this bank. Greg concluded that the letter was likely a marketing ploy and instructed the bank to disregard the communication.
* Columbia Port Commission Policy Procedure Manual

Laura Hartt finalized her revisions to the Port’s Policy Manual. After review, the Commissioners approved and officially adopted the updated manual.

* Outstanding Grant Application
	+ CFI grant application – Hydrogen Distribution Facility
	+ Capital Outlay (1) Railspur and (2) Land Purchase

4.4 Tenant Updates:

* Guerrero Farms:
David was instructed to pay the 2024 rent, totaling $10,000, by the end of the year. Greg requested the board’s approval to reduce the lease amount by $1,000 to account for maintenance work around the property perimeter and damages caused to David’s crops by onsite activities.
* McClanahan:
McClanahan has failed to make payments for July, August, September, October, and November. As the tenant remains delinquent, Greg requested the board's permission to initiate discussions about eviction if significant progress is not made toward settling the outstanding balance of $3,000 from 2023 and the remaining $3,000 for 2024.
* Terral RiverServices:
Terral are storing cottonseed in the old grain elevator as discussed last month at $3,000 per month.
* LGF:
LGF continues to push forward with dock design, permitting, and construction collaboration.

5. Approval of Invoices:

Greg reviewed all outstanding invoices.

**A motion to pay all outstanding bills was made by Charles Hearns and seconded by Mark McKee. The motion passed unanimously.**

6. Adjournment:

**A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Charles Hearns and seconded by Bruce Frazier. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned.**