

## September 2023 Meeting Minutes

**Attending:** Barbara Menne, Chuck Jensen, Elly Claus-McGahan, Debra Grady, Jason Berkowitz, Nancy Atwood, Sue Lepore, Linda Cohan, Ginny Lohr, and new member Karen Stringer. This ZOOM meeting screen was enhanced with closed captioning.

### Announcements

Several members are planning to attend the **WA State CCL Conference**, on **Sept. 22-24** at the [Rainbow Lodge Retreat Center](#) in **North Bend**.

A good way to make our local advocacy more effective will be to consistently read the nine **city councilmembers' newsletters**, keeping up with opinions and new trends. We will need to divide this task amongst us so please let [Barbara Menne](#) know of your interest in covering one or two.

The tabling season is wrapping up. The [Steilacoom Drive Electric Festival](#) took place on Saturday Sept. 16. [Photos](#). If you hear of ideas for future venues, contact [Linda Cohan](#).

### Candidate Interview, Dave Bryant, Port Commissioner Position 5

A [recording](#) of this interview is available on our website.

Dave Bryant introduced himself, emphasizing that his background meshes well with the needs of the Port. In his 27 years in the Navy he flew airplanes, then became commanding officer of nuclear aircraft carriers sailing to ports all over the world, and big ships and moving cargo is what the Port is all about as well. He worked for Boeing for the past 22 years developing advanced transportation technology which also relates directly to the Port's needs. He wants to give back to the community now by serving as a Commissioner.

1. **Where do you see climate issues having major impacts on areas under the Port's jurisdiction and how will you guide the Port's response to those issues?**

The Port has a lot of emissions, in three groupings. About 3% comes from all the Port infrastructure itself, under the jurisdiction of the Port and already in the process of electrification. Much more comes from the cargo ships which typically run on bunker fuel, the cheapest and dirtiest diesel fuel. Emission levels are restricted near the Port but they get around that by using a salt water shower through the exhaust that they store and later dump right in the open ocean. Trucks and trains represent about another 50%, and there is a push to transition them to cleaner fuels. But proposals for battery-operated semi's run into problems with the significant cost increases plus the large heavy batteries leaving much less room for cargo.

**Q-Chuck Jensen--future of hydrogen-powered heavy-duty trucks?**

Pure liquid hydrogen is dangerous stored at large scale—the extreme low temperature and high pressure needed, the leakage and combustibility. But if you use other liquids as hydrogen carriers, such as ammonia, you get around that problem. There's a group in Redmond successfully working with using catalytic release of hydrogen from ammonia. With that, you can also use the existing diesel engines and therefore reduce the costs a lot.

**Q-Barbara Menne--Concern about sea level rise?**

Yes, it is a concern. But historically it has risen a foot every 100 years, so we probably have a 100-year margin, certainly enough time to adapt for our low-lying Port area. According to some studies the rate may be faster, which would still leave us with 60 or 70 years per foot. We have room for a rise of about 3 more feet before major changes would have to be made on the Port.

**2. Do you have a plan to manage new development in the Port so that there can be a balance between paved space, green space, and habitat? So development does not lead to further environmental degradation through loss of green space and increased construction & traffic?**

I don't think there is that much need for striking that balance. We need to make things affordable for the customers to receive the products. This is a case of "the perfect is the enemy of the good." Desire to do everything on batteries? On cars they work tremendously well. But when we look at large-scale battery use in trucks, trains and especially huge long-distance ships—it's just not feasible; doesn't apply. We are looking at things like fuel cells, liquid hydrogen fuel, ammonia with natural gas, to make the change to a much much cleaner fuel.

**Q-Elly Claus-McGahan-- There are other experiments such as putting a new kind of sail on ships and solar power and other ways to reduce the amount of fuel needed for long-distance ships.**

In fact a ship already exists with large vertical metal sails which reduces the amount of fuel needed by 20% which is worth the investment (out of 1.5 million gallons per trip). But without legal or other constraints, shipping companies are going to just go for the very cheapest dirtiest \$1.25 bunker fuel vs \$3 clean diesel anyway.

**Q-Elly Claus-McGahan-- International Maritime Union is calling for them to reduce their emissions by 50% by 2050; can international ships be controlled in that regard?**

Ships are flagged and controlled by their own countries. But international standards are being worked on by the IMU and the UN. The critical way to sell it is to make it affordable and fair-- implemented by everyone at the same time. There are methods to reduce emissions, I think the most reasonable ones use the existing diesel engines (in cargo ships, the ship is essentially built around the engine, it is a huge, nonreplaceable part and you'd essentially just have to build a entirely new \$billion ship). Almost every shipping country is working on this kind of cleaner fuel technology.

**3. Between the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, Infrastructure, and Build Back Better Bills, there will be a lot of federal money for local climate measures. How do you**

**plan to tap into these funds for use by the Port? What would your priorities be for spending these funds?**

A proposal has been made by that ammonia/hydrogen fuel company in Redmond for a \$10-20 million grant to build a “green hydrogen highway” running from the Port of LA to the port of Seattle. It would have ammonia stations in route and would convert four diesel trains and 50 diesel trucks to test out this new fuel. Another funding priority would be to get grants to aid in the transition to electric of the existing internal Port vehicles. And although we don’t build big ships in the U.S., we can get grant money for experimentation on fuels for them or a lab for “iron maidens” to prove viability of experimental concepts on fuels.

**4. What is your plan to bring and support green, renewable energy jobs that are also high-wage, to the Port and County? What about green hydrogen hubs?**

It depends on the type of hydrogen. It can be one of the most dangerous fuels to work with. Green hydrogen production uses electrolysis with water, which is an incredibly expensive process, vs using methane to create hydrogen fuel. Methane is much more easily stored.

**Q-Elly Claus-McGahan—there is already a green hydrogen project in the works using electrolysis, not methane, to potentially service JBLM, so that is not a new idea for the Port. With the closure of the WestRock pulp mill (unused water) and our hydro electric source, making green hydrogen seems like a smart move?**

The high expense, intense energy use, and combustion risk are barriers to that. There’s not really enough land there for large export-scale fuel production. In the next 10-15 years when the WestRock land is cleaned up, we need to partner with the right kind of company that supports new propulsion systems for ships. Whether its fueling or repairing the engines or that new kind of propulsion. Good kinds of jobs come from businesses like this, and if we are leading the effort to support the ship companies, that makes the Port an attractive place for them to come to. Electrifying Port infrastructure will sustain union jobs.

**5. What are current tribal environmental concerns with the Port and how do you plan to address them?**

The Puyallup tribe has just started getting into the import-export business and are working on their own terminal on their own section of land on the Port. They are members of the NW Seaport Alliance and will be a perfect partner in the future for Port operations. A vocal minority of the tribe would like to see everything removed from the Tideflats and returned to exactly the way it was two thousand years ago. One of the ways to work that side of things, which is important, is to restore the areas that can be done. Tribal lands are among those contaminated by operations down in the Port over the past 100 plus years. State taxpayer money comes in to repair those lands and return them back to a natural state. Almost the whole Port was declared a Superfund site 30 years ago. Hard to imagine what people (such as the aluminum plant) did

legally, the dumping of toxic materials. The cleanup has to be done before the land can be utilized in new ways.

## Q & A

### **Chuck Jensen—There are insinuations in the press that the Port of Tacoma is not getting a fair shake with its alliance with Seattle in the NW Seaport Alliance?**

Yes, that's definitely an issue. The Alliance was formed seven years ago, great reasons for the two seaports getting together--proximity, sharing resources. If we compete with each other vs with LA or Vancouver, we drive business away. But over those seven years there have been lots of changes; we have lost about 25% of the market share that we need to recover. There needs to be an audit of all the facilities, equipment, the land, all assets to verify that citizens of the two areas are still getting a fair distribution of both work and revenue.

**Concluding remark:** Mr. Bryant is a big fan of the spirit of President Theodore Roosevelt (his own ship was the USS Theodore Roosevelt), who in a lot of ways was the founder of the U.S. conservation movement. He believes that it is part of the U.S. ethos "to take care of the land that is entrusted to you."

## Special Reports:

### **Elly Claus-McGahan—Community Solar**

Our chapter has been asked to sign on and support an Olympia-based advocacy campaign for legislature supporting the **Community Solar** program. In that, a large solar project in a community is constructed (such as on a school roof) and then through a utility you can sign up to get money back as it starts generating electricity or your bill is reduced because part of the electricity is being generated by solar. The point is to reduce bills, particularly for low-income families including renters, by letting them be part of a community solar project when they can't afford to put solar on their own roofs. (TPU says that solar is not a benefit to them since 97% of our power comes from very cheap hydro; they have to support the extra solar using their infrastructure). But it can be a benefit for owners of solar and low-income communities.

### **Debra Grady—Tacoma Urban Forest Friends (TUFF)**

A city tree ordinance that the council is considering was just put before a subcommittee last week. **TUFF** has drafted a petition to present to them, urging stronger measures and increasing Tacoma's tree canopy, which is still woefully inadequate at twenty percent even though a decade ago the city set a goal to increase it to 30 percent. **Tacoma Tree Foundation** and **1000 Trees for Tacoma** represent good efforts at planting new trees, but they take decades to mature. There is no ordinance currently in place robust enough to preserve the existing mature tree canopy and the much greater environmental benefits that large established trees provide.

#### **Ideas include:**

Start a **tree appreciation program**-- nominate trees and put up plaques for "heritage" or "champion" trees, and organize tree walks to bring recognition of their value to our community. Create an **urban forest commission and a landscape architect position.**

**Make stronger penalties for removing or topping trees without good cause.**

**Continued watering and care for new trees planted after city construction projects.**

**TUFF** is now asking the community for signatures for their petition, going to groups such as **CCL** for help in distribution. (This is in person/on paper only). Contact [Debra Grady](#) if you want to help.