

'Issues' cause Port to delay Hayden Island project

BY SHELLY STROM

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Bowing to outside pressures, the Port of Portland's scheme to develop 827 acres on West Hayden Island has been delayed for further study.

The Port of Portland has been working for years to develop its West Hayden Island property for marine cargo use. The most recent timetable called for city of Portland zoning approvals to be in hand by the end of this summer. The port wanted a draft version of an environment impact study to be completed by January 2001.

But now port officials have decided to wait until after consultants have completed the EIS to ask the city to change zoning.

The reason, said Paul Shirey, a port project manager, is that more attention needs to be given to such issues as:

- Whether the port properly weighed the pros and cons of West Hayden Island against other properties in or out of its jurisdiction, a step that is required by federal environmental laws;

- Whether the port should collaborate with the Port of Vancouver;

- And, whether the Port has come up with the best plan for dealing with the loss of wetlands and uplands that will happen once the project is developed.

The proposal's critics say the port shouldn't develop the property based on 50-year regional forecasts that may not necessarily unfold as the port predicts.

"Given the level of debate, it may make a lot more sense to resolve some of those primarily federal issues," said Shirey.

Port officials, Shirey said, recognized that questions raised by people on the port's West Hayden Island citizen committee hadn't been adequately answered, even though the committee's work had been wrapped up this spring.

One of the loudest critics of the proposal is Bob Sallinger, who represents Portland Audubon Society on the citizen committee. Sallinger has repeatedly suggested Portland officials talk to the Port of Vancouver about some sort of collaboration for developing cargo facilities on the Columbia River. The two ports should work together to provide facilities and infrastructure for regional demand. Otherwise, said Sallinger, they end up not only competing for business but both might have excess cargo capacity.

The time is right for collaboration, Sallinger said. The Vancouver port is considering how to best develop a 1,080-acre chunk of waterfront property known as Columbia Gateway. The Vancouver port is expecting a draft version of its own EIS by January 2001.

Shirey said the Portland port is shifting gears after it spent a couple of months preparing its request for approval from the Portland City Council. "It was kind of an 'aha' or a light going on," Shirey said.

"Following completion of the advisory committee, we were realizing people still had a lot of issues. We were asking ourselves how that would be dealt with through the city process," Shirey said, noting that those issues likely would be brought up in public hearings that are part



Sallinger



Shirey

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PORT OF PORTLAND

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of the city's zoning process.

"Why kind of clutter the city process with all these issues? We said, 'Gee, if we've got all these federal issues that are confusing the city decision-makers, why not resolve them and understand that they've been set aside and then go ahead with the zoning request?' It's cleaner. It isn't so muddled."

Shirey said he expects the Portland officials will meet with Vancouver officials before the end of the year.

"We're talking about cooperation," he said. "There is a perception that the Port of Portland and the Port of Vancouver don't talk to each other or that we are in competition and adversarial. We understand that it's in both our interests, with respect to our development projects, to cooperate as much as we possibly can."

Six years ago, the Port of Portland bought the piece of West Hayden Island, rural property to the west of Jantzen Beach Super Center on Hayden Island. The port said that it would become one of its biggest projects.

The property has been earmarked for marine cargo use since 1983. Port officials say development on the property is needed in order to meet the 50-year forecasted demand for marine terminals.

Plans so far call for the port to provide infrastructure: roads, a railroad loop track, floating docks, a bridge from North Portland into port property and auto- and grain-loading facilities. The port's portion of expenses is expected to cost \$150 million. Tenants would cover the cost of buildings.

Port of Portland officials have been reluctant to consider the notion of collaboration with Vancouver, saying the Vancouver project isn't comparable to West Hayden Island and that it isn't far enough along for any collaboration.

Now, however, Port of Portland officials have changed their opinion.

"We are on different timelines, we do serve different markets. Those are sort of the substantive differences. But the Port of Vancouver has made a lot of progress in the process of deciding what they're going to do with their proposal. Before it was very general. Compared to when we were talking last spring to Port of Vancouver last spring, they have since brought more detail into their planning."

The Vancouver port has had conceptual details—the loop track, space for light industrial and grain facilities—on the drawing board for two years.

"We put a master plan out for discussion two years ago," said Larry Paulson, Port of Vancouver executive director. Paulson said he's eager for the ports to try to collaborate. "We want to see what's really coming into the river so we can have some kind of idea of what facilities will be needed. We're in informal discussions at this point." □