

**MINUTES  
NOME PORT COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021**

The Regular Meeting of the Nome Port Commission was called to order at 6:35 pm by Chairman West in Council Chambers at City Hall, located at 102 Division Street.

**ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Smithhisler (telephonically); Lean; West; Henderson; Rowe; Sheffield (telephonically); McLarty

Absent:

Also Present: Joy Baker, Port Director (telephonically); Glenn Steckman, City Manager

In the audience: James Mason; Cathy Rubano

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chairman West asked for a motion to approve the agenda:

Motion to approve made by Henderson, seconded by McLarty.

At the Roll Call:

Ayes: Smithhisler; West; Henderson; Rowe; Sheffield; McLarty; Lean

Nays:

Abstain:

The motion **CARRIED**.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Nov 19th, 2020                      Motion made by Henderson, seconded by Lean to approve minutes;  
Regular Meeting

At the Roll Call

Ayes: West; Henderson; Rowe; Sheffield; McLarty; Smithhisler; Lean

Nays:

Abstain:

The motion **CARRIED**.

**CITIZENS' COMMENTS**

Isaac Thompson informed the Port Commission about his intent to open a 30x60 ft machine shop along Port Rd, with desire to use a section of land that is partially on Lot 1, and Lot 2. He has been working with the owners of Lot 1 to gain access to the area through an existing quonset hut that sits on the mutual property line of Lot 2, owned by the City of Nome. He is prepared to select another location on Lot 1, if he is unable to use a portion of the City's property.

The following concerns were raised during group discussion;

- If the building did not have a 'mechanical room' or flush toilet, it may not meet building and flood plain codes.
- The City of Nome has set aside lots 2 & 3 to serve as uplands for the Snake River Moorage and Haulout Facility.
- The Lot 1 property has shared ownership between Cape Nome Mining and Arctic Sea Mining.
- Lean suggested filling property east of the quonset, and turning the shop 90 degrees to provide more space.
- The Port Commission generally supported the idea of Mr. Thompson moving forward with his business plan to develop a machine shop, but remain within the extents of Lot 1. This is a prime location for a machine shop, and a fine example of the types of marine-related business development the City needs.

## COMMUNICATIONS

- 20-12-02 Arctic Sea Ice News and Analysis
- 20-12-15 Machine Shop Proposal – Isaac Thompson
- 21-01-07 Nation's sole heavy icebreaker preparing to patrol Arctic waters – APM
- 21-01-14 Congress Authorizes Deep Water Port in Nome - KNOM

### Discussion:

- Sheffield commented that the Polar Star is currently operating about 50 miles south of Nome. In the last 2 weeks we have had 3-900 ft liquid natural gas (LNG) tankers operating unescorted in the region.
  - It is anticipated that by 2024, there will year-round traffic due to low ice conditions, within 15 miles of Diomedes and 30 miles of Gambell.
  - One tankers damaged an Azipod (main propulsion) in the ice, but not much info has been released.

## COMMISSIONER'S UPDATES

None.

## HARBORMASTER'S REPORT

- HM Stotts went home ill earlier in the day, so was not able to join – PD Baker provided a brief update.
  - Overview of geo-tech work completed on both the undeveloped and developed areas of the TBS property. Golder completed 4 out of 5 total holes due to complications with the deep snow.

## PORT DIRECTOR'S REPORT

PD Baker stated that the Arctic Deep Draft Port project has made progress and with the final feasibility study authorized by Congress on Dec 21<sup>st</sup> and signed by the President on Dec 27<sup>th</sup>. Word was then released that the USACE HQ had been given work plan funding for a number of projects that were on hold for funding. The City will now begin negotiating the draft design agreement with the Corps, and increasing efforts to identify construction funding.

### Discussion:

- Sheffield asked PD Baker for clarification on the local news that the expansion at Nome was authorized and what that now meant for us.
  - PD Baker commented that the wording was slightly misleading and did not mean the Port expansion was funded, only that the USACE project identified in the Nome Feasibility Study was authorized to move forward, and construction funds must be appropriated for both federal and non-federal shares.
- Sheffield asked if the City's portion of \$126 million has to be non-federal money.
  - PD Baker commented no, it could be some non-federal and some federal.
- Lean commented that the Port of Nome is the country's Arctic Port. It would allow access to conduct all the research and other projects that are only going to increase in the region.
  - Bringing in partners like private industry and the military are how this port is going to be built and those typically come with preferential use agreements of some type?
- Henderson asked if there was any change in thought on this project for Nome now that Congress has had some changes.
  - PD Baker commented that City Staff and our lobbyist are pursuing several avenues with the current administration.
  - CM Steckman commented that there is bipartisan support for building an Arctic Port and that we are trying to get the word out of an "Arctic Port at Nome" to emphasize the benefits to the region and nation.

## OLD BUSINESS None.

## NEW BUSINESS

Launch Ramp Replacement Project – Additional EDA Funds Request + City Match

- PD Baker said bids for this project came in much higher – at least \$1M beyond funding levels.
- A revised permitting application has been submitted to the Corps, and a request for additional funds has

been submitted to EDA. We anticipate approval of both efforts, which will enable the project to move forward with bidding and construction.

- Post tensioning rods were removed and other design specs changed to help reduce cost.
- The dewatering coffer dam was also removed in an effort to align bids with available funding.

**Motion:**

The following motion was moved by Lean and seconded by Rowe:

Recommending the Common Council support up to \$270K in matching funds to meet cost-share of U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant #07-01-07499, of which additional funds are being requested to demo and construct the Launch Ramp Replacement Project.

**Discussion:**

- McLarty asked if the City should possibly look into another engineering company to come up with a new design that may not cost \$100,000.

At the Roll Call:

Ayes: Rowe, Sheffield, McLarty, Smithhisler, Lean, West, Henderson,

Nays:

Abstain:

The motion **CARRIED** unanimously.

**CITIZENS' COMMENTS**

None.

**COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS**

Smithhisler had no comments.

Sheffield commented that we should expect increased and year-round commercial foreign traffic through the Strait.

McLarty thanked Mr. Thompson for bring his business idea to the table and hope that will spread to others who wish to do business around the Port of Nome.

Rowe commented he wishes the best of luck to Mr. Thompson and that Lot #1, which he is currently on, is about 4 times the size of any adjacent lots so would suggest pursuing space on Lot #1. Noted it was interesting on the POLAR STAR; that the vessel was commissioned in 1976 and this is its first Arctic deployment since 1982.

Henderson had no comments.

Lean commented that the U.S. is looking to lease more ice capable vessels to join the fleet in the near future and that he hopes the increased presence and focus on the region will bring some assistance to construct this port expansion. There is a lot of talk nationally for funding of roads and bridges and feels this fits that description as well. Also noted that the local winter crab fishery may open Feb 1<sup>st</sup> with ongoing discussion going on currently. The situation is that the vast majority of crab are not of legal size currently. NSEDC has stated that they will not buy this winter.

West commented that we are at the beginning stages of the Deep Draft Port expansion and that the USA has realized how far behind we are in icebreaker capabilities and controlling the coastline.

CM Steckman commented that anyone in Nome over the age of 16 can now be vaccinated.


**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion was made by Sheffield for adjournment 8:10 pm.

**APPROVED** and **SIGNED** this 18<sup>th</sup> day of February 2021.

 for JW  
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Jim West, Chairman

**ATTEST:**

  
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Joy Baker, Port Director