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APPROVED MINUTES COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING JUNE 30, 2020

The Port of Seattle Commission met in a special meeting Tuesday, June 30, 2020. The meeting was held remotely in accordance with the governor's 'Stay at Home' order and Proclamation 20-28. Commissioners Bowman, Calkins, Cho, Felleman, and Steinbrueck were present.

1. CALL to ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 10:33 a.m. by Commission President Steinbrueck, who led the flag salute. Commission President Steinbrueck continued by recognizing June as Pride Month and honoring its 50th anniversary of official Pride Month celebrations in the nation. He spoke regarding the recent Supreme Court ruling for protections for gay and transgender workers so employees cannot be fired under federal law simply because of their gender identity or sexual orientation; and recognized the efforts of the employee resource group that has been active in raising awareness of social issues at the Port, supporting and advocating for initiatives and programs that pertain to a diverse cross-section of Port employees, their spouses/partners, and families.

Commission President Steinbrueck turned to the purpose of today's special meeting, addressing systemic racism and the unjust deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Manuel Ellis, Rayshard Brooks, Ahmaud Arbery and many other black Americans; the need for broad social change in this regard; and the responsibility to ensure that the Port Police are held to the highest national standards achievable for public safety, protection of civil rights, equity, accountability, and oversight. Commission President Steinbrueck noted that the purpose of the proposed comprehensive assessment of the Port Police Department is in no way a reaction to any specific issue with the department, but rather is an opportunity to respond with clear intent during this time of awakening across the country. The motion speaks to how best practices relate to equity in policing and how civil rights protections can best align to Port values. Today's community forum is being held at the specific request of the Port's employee resource group, Blacks in Government (BIG), to solicit further staff and community input on the motion. He thanked the members of BIG who have lead focus groups and conversations on the topic so that we can gather input, ideas, and perspectives to inform the motion. The motion would direct a comprehensive assessment of the Port Police Department, its policies, procedures, and practices, and would establish a task force to assess the issue and make recommendations to the Commission and Executive Director for this better Port alignment.

Commissioner Calkins, co-sponsor of the motion, spoke to the powers conferred to the Port Police Department; the assessment of its operations, as is common in reviewing other Port functions; and the responsibility of the Port to make any performance improvements possible so that policing is equitable to all persons. He spoke to conversations and accounts he has had with people affected by inequity, and stated it is important to ensure that the Port Police Department continues to be a model for police agencies across the state and the country.

Executive Director Steve Metruck thanked everyone for engaging in the conversation. He stated that communities and institutions across the nation are now engaged in important conversations about racism, acknowledging our troubled past and demanding meaningful actions to create a more inclusive and just society. Executive Director Metruck advised that the Port continues to have an important role to play in these discussions and call to action; that as a nation, we are asking critical questions about the role of law enforcement and what we ask of the men and women who have chosen to serve in the profession, with all its challenges. He stated that the motion is before the community today because of the leadership of the Commission, the leaders in Blacks in Government at the Port, Acting Police Chief Michael Villa, and the contributions of many at the Port. "The Port Police Department has a special and critical role in protecting the traveling public, our employees, our businesses, and vital infrastructure for trade and commerce." The motion is an opportunity to study and recommend ways that we can improve. Executive Director Metruck stated that he fully supports the motion; is committed to the effort and the call to action; and looks forward to the engagement to bring about change from Blacks in Government and Police leadership.

Commissioners Felleman, Cho, and Bowman also expressed thanks for the leadership shown by Port staff and Blacks in Government in addressing the challenge and in the policy development to study the issue of equity in policing. Commissioners echoed comments that it is important to note the Port Police has an excellent reputation and they are looking for guidance on ways to improve.

Delmas Whittaker, President of Blacks in Government, and Chairman of the Blacks in Government focus group, addressed the Commission regarding the opportunity to review the draft motion for a comprehensive assessment of the Port Police Department and the creation of a Commission task force to lead the effort. He stated that locally and nationally, the call for substantive change, particularly in regard to policing policies and procedures that disproportionately impact black and brown people, need to be eliminated immediately. He spoke to the efforts of the Blacks in Government focus group and opined that immediate actions need to be included for the motion to be effective. "The collective voices we are here to serve are needed to make these meaningful and substantive changes." He emphasized the work of the focus group and the work of this proposed motion not being connected to any one incident in the Police Department; and is not intended to be an indictment of the police department. Mr. Whittaker expressed that the work our officers do is valued every single day. The motion is intended to assess and eliminate those policies that may tarnish the high standards set by our department and expected by our community. He thanked the Commission, the Police Department, and staff for taking the time to participate in these conversations and for allowing him to address the Commission.

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION pursuant to RCW 42.30.110 – None.

3. APPROVAL of the AGENDA

Without objection, the preliminary agenda was approved as presented without objection.

4. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Executive Director Steve Metruck had no additional reports at this time.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

The following people spoke in support of Motion 2020-15 of the Port of Seattle regarding the assessment of the Port of Seattle Police Department and the establishment of a task force to study equity in police policies and procedures:

- Rachel English, Port employee;
- Tiffany Sevilla, Port employee;
- Jessica Sanford, Port employee;
- Rudy Caluza, Port of Seattle Director of Accounting and Financial Reporting and Member of Black Lives Matters;
- Duane Hill, Senior Manager for Disbursements for the Port;
- Adrian Down, Port employee;
- Efrain Lopez, Port employee, corresponding written comments submitted, which is attached as an exhibit to these minutes;
- Kenny Lyles, Port employee; and
- Earnest Thompson, Citizen.

Written comments were received and entered as an exhibit to these minutes from the following individuals regarding Motion 2020-15 (All public comment is listed as [Exhibit A](#)):

- Rob Lane, Port employee;
- Jessica Sanford, Port employee;
- Kati Davich, Port employee;
- Alicia Franklin, Port employee;
- JC Harris, Citizen;
- Kaitlyn Jensen, Port employee;
- Jennifer Lee, Technology and Liberty Manager, ACLU of Washington;
- Sofia Mayo, Port employee;
- Stanley Shikuma, Japanese American Citizens League, Seattle Chapter;
- Cynthia Spiess, Citizen;
- Brendalynn Taulelei, Port employee; and
- Unidentified sender.

6. UNANIMOUS CONSENT CALENDAR – None.

7. SPECIAL ORDERS of BUSINESS – None.

8. AUTHORIZATIONS and FINAL ACTIONS – None.

9. PRESENTATIONS, REPORTS, and STAFF BRIEFINGS

- 9a. Briefing on Draft Motion 2020-15: A Motion of the Port of Seattle Commission to direct a comprehensive assessment of the Port of Seattle Police Department to ensure alignment with the highest national standards and best practices related to policing; and to establish a Commission Task Force to lead the assessment and develop recommendations for action.**

Presentation document(s) included an [agenda memorandum](#) and [draft motion](#).

Presenter(s): Eric Schinfeld, Interim Commission Chief of Staff; Veronica Valdez, Commission Specialist.

Mr. Eric Schinfeld, Interim Chief of Staff and Ms. Veronica Valdez, Commission Specialist, presented the contents of the draft motion. They advised that the motion represents progress to-date, with knowledge that there is still significant work to be done. An updated version of the motion will be forthcoming prior to the July 14, 2020, meeting, where the motion will be taken up for discussion and action. The report included an overview of the five action directives of the Port of Seattle Commission, to include conducting a comprehensive assessment of the Police Department to ensure alignment with the highest national standards and best practices related to policing; and establishment of a Commission Task Force on Port Policing and Civil Rights to lead the assessment and develop recommendations for action. The report further overviewed assessment categories and next steps in the process. The proposed motion will be brought forward to the Commission for action on July 14, 2020, with the first progress report to the Commission by October 31, 2020.

Members of the Commission provided comments to staff regarding the draft motion and discussed:

- the involvement of the Port Police Department in providing feedback to Motion 2020-15, and the level of current oversight of the department;
- ensuring that the assessment is appropriate with respect to transparency, mutual aide, adoption of technology and equipment; and the people the Port serves;
- how the task force will interact with other task forces around it and insights that can be gained through working with others;
- sharing best practices and lessons learned from the assessment; and
- looking at demographics of the current police force regarding recruitment and with the goal of getting more people interested in being an officer.

Blacks in Government representatives Delmas Whittaker; Marin Burnett, and Amira Chowyuk addressed the Commission speaking to:

- why we are here;
- over 200 participants collectively speaking to help frame the motion, with additional input coming from shift workers;
- continued work and input needed from the community and the employees of the Port; and
- having part of the assessment conducted by a third-party subject matter expert to help inform the motion and task force.

Acting Police Chief Michael Villa spoke regarding:

- the role of the police department with respect to the motion;
- mutual aid; and
- areas where we are blind to arrogance.

Members of the Commission commented regarding:

- the willingness of the Police Department to expose themselves to changes;

- the unique nature of the Port Police and their jurisdiction;
- the role of the Port Police in acting as a regulatory agency working with partners that other police forces do not;
- members of the taskforce conducting ride-a-longs with officers; and
- spending a full shift with officers to really understand their unique environment and needs.

Executive Director Metruck and Members of the Commission appreciated Acting Chief Villa's willingness to facilitate the discussion and policy review and BIG's and other employees work to bring the motion forward.

Mr. Whittaker acknowledged all participants in the BIG group and Acting Chief Villa for their work and expressed that he looks forward to continued conversations.

Commission President Steinbrueck thanked everyone for participating in the meeting and advised that Motion 2020-15 would be before the Commission for consideration on July 14, 2020.

10. QUESTIONS on REFERRAL to COMMITTEE – None.

11. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business, and the meeting adjourned at 1:10 p.m.

Prepared:

Attest:

Michelle M. Hart, MMC, Commission Clerk

Sam H. Cho, Commission Secretary

Minutes approved: July 28, 2020.