

# Port of Vancouver USA Factsheet

## Increasing to a five-member Board of Commissioners

### PORT COMMISSIONERS SET POLICIES THAT GUIDE THE DEVELOPMENT, GROWTH AND OPERATIONS OF THE PORT'S FACILITIES AND FUNCTIONS.

**PORT OF VANCOUVER USA** is one of 75 port districts in the state of Washington. Currently, 70 of the ports operate with a three-member board of commissioners; five ports have a five-member board.

The Port of Vancouver taxing district encompasses an area of 111 square miles with a population of approximately 313,000. At 1,643 acres of public property, 50 tenant businesses and an annual budget of \$68 million, the Port of Vancouver is the state's third-largest port in terms of assets.

The port district is divided equally by population into three sub-districts with each district electing a commissioner to represent its residents. Commissioners are elected to six-year, staggered terms of office. They hold official public meetings twice a month and participate in other meetings and activities in-between.

In early 2018, the commissioners directed port staff to prepare a comparison of costs associated with a three-member and five-member board of commissioners. The comparison was presented to the board at their public meeting on February 13, 2018. The commissioners directed staff to organize a public meeting so they could discuss this information with port district residents.

#### APPROXIMATE ANNUAL COST:\*

##### Three-member Board of Commissioners:

\$212,871

##### Five-member Board of Commissioners:

\$463,452

\*Cost includes salary, per diem, benefits, conferences, elections, redistricting fees and administrative and IT support.

#### PROCESS FOR INCREASING NUMBER OF COMMISSIONERS

There are three ways the port's board can be increased from three to five members:

- 1** The port commissioners could themselves adopt a resolution proposing an increase in the number of commissioners; or
- 2** Voters could petition for the increase by submitting signatures from at least 10 percent of voters in the port district to the County Auditor; or
- 3** Per Washington state law, there is an automatic, mandatory vote if the port district population reaches 500,000 residents or more.

With any scenario, a ballot proposition is submitted to port district voters at the next special or general election.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Why do ports have a board of commissioners? What do they do?

The Washington State Legislature has built into the management of port districts, like other local governmental bodies, a system of checks and balances to minimize dangers of errors or abuse. The port commission, like a city council, is the port district's policy making and regulatory body. Their mission is to build and operate facilities to foster trade and economic development. Port commissioners set policies that guide the development, growth and operations of the port's facilities and functions. These policies might involve adopting plans, establishing policies, adopting budgets, levying taxes, delegating authority and overseeing the hiring and work of the port's CEO. Being a port commissioner is considered a part-time job; typically, port commissioners participate in other work or are retired.

## How would the two new commissioners be chosen?

This could be done in multiple ways. The County Auditor could equally divide the port district into five new districts. Current commissioners would retain their districts, but the County would redraw district boundaries to ensure each district is roughly the same size in population. Then, the County Elections Department would declare the two new offices open for election and interested candidates would file to run. Another way two new commissioners could be chosen is that the County Auditor could create two at-large commission positions that would represent the entire district, with the current commissioners retaining their districts. The at-large positions would be declared open for election and interested candidates would file to run.

## Who pays for port elections?

The port is responsible for covering the costs of commission elections and budgets for it in election years. Expenses associated with elections are administrative expenses and are paid from revenues generated by the port's marine, industrial and commercial operations.

## Where would funds for the additional commissioners come from?

Expenses associated with the port's commissioners are administrative expenses and are paid from revenues generated by the port's marine, industrial and commercial operations. The port collects nearly \$10 million in taxes from property owners in the port district, but these funds are used only for payment of debt service, environmental remediation and capital improvements and are not used for salaries or expenses associated with the Board of Commissioners.

## Who is my port commissioner?

The port currently has three districts covering about one-third of Clark County. District boundaries are adjusted every 10 years by the Clark County Elections Department, based on results of the population census, to reduce minor disparities in population that can occur over time. The last boundary adjustment was done in August 2011. You can find a map of the port district and which commissioner represents each on the port's website.

### DISTRICT 1

**Commissioner:** Don Orange

**Term of Office:** 2017-2023

**Residents:** 105,889

### DISTRICT 2

**Commissioner:** Eric LaBrant

**Term of Office:** 2015-2021

**Residents:** 105,027

### DISTRICT 3

**Commissioner:** Jerry Oliver

**Term of Office:** 2007-2013, Re-elected 2013-2019

**Residents:** 102,630

*The state of Washington does not set a limit on the number of terms a commissioner can serve.*

## FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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