

# KNOW YOUR PORT:

## What Port Commissioners Do

***A port commission, like a city council or county commission, is a quasi-legislative body that establishes policies to guide the port district.***

These policies or decisions might involve adopting plans, establishing positions and setting employment policies, purchasing or disposing of real estate and other property, setting rates, adopting budgets, or levying taxes.

Port commissioners set the policies that guide the development, growth and operation of all the port's facilities and functions.

They provide for the hiring of professional staff charged with carrying out and administering established policies. Members of the port commission are themselves accountable for their actions under many of the state's civil and criminal laws. They're also accountable to the people since they must stand for re-election at the end of their term.

The commission is responsible for retaining an executive director who derives authority from the commission and implements the objectives established by the port commissioners.

Any commission directives or initiatives are made through the executive director and shall be made only by the commission acting as a body. The executive director shall regularly inform and consult with the commission, by a method mutually agreeable to the commission and the executive director, regarding execution of port policies, port operations, and information relevant to commission oversight. The executive director shall serve as the primary spokesperson for the management of the port.

In summary, the role of the commission is to set policies and standards as above. The executive director, working with port staff, executes these directives. The commission does not directly engage in the operations of the port.

### **A Commissioner's Job Description**

*From the Washington Public Ports Association's Commissioners Resource Guide*

#### ***Planning, Goal-Setting, Evaluation***

The port commission helps plan the port's future, and then guides port activities in that direction. This planning process involves the port commission, executive director, port staff, customers and citizens/voters. The process usually includes identifying a port's mission and goals and developing strategies to achieve them. The port commission is ultimately responsible for evaluating and updating the planning process.

#### ***Port District Policy Making***

The port commission develops and adopts port district policies to implement port goals and govern the many facets of port district operations. These include developing guidelines for long-term economic development, establishing positions and employment policies, and adopting budgets.

#### ***Budgeting***

The port commission approves and adopts an annual budget. Some key budget decisions include authorizing and adopting tax levy amounts, adopting policies, approving purchases, and disposing of or distributing supplies, property, and equipment.

#### ***Designating the Port's Executive Director***

The port commission is responsible for recruiting, hiring and evaluating the performance of the port's chief executive. The commission delegates responsibility to this port executive director, then respects that delegated authority.

*Adapted from the Washington Public Ports Association's Commissioners Resource Guide at <http://washingtonports.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/commissionerresourceguidemarch2010.pdf>*