



**RAINIER
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE**

Community & Business working together

P.O. Box 1085

Rainier, OR 97048

rainierchamberofcommerce@gmail.com

Board of Commissioners, Columbia County
230 Strand Street
St. Helens, OR 97051

Re: NEXT Renewable Fuels Local Land Use Permits

Dear Columbia County Commissioners:

I am writing on behalf of the Rainier Chamber of Commerce and its members to comment on the proposed NEXT Renewable Fuels permits, and to voice our full support that the project be permitted. NEXT meets the stringent regulations for local land use permits and will be a major economic contributor to our region.

The Rainier Chamber focuses on our region's economic success, and the \$2 billion NEXT project is the kind of infrastructure development that provides ripple benefits throughout our community. More than 70 percent of our county population leaves town for work every day. While it's a necessity so workers can support their lives and the lives of their families, it's a tragedy that more opportunity isn't available here in wonderful Columbia County. Construction of this facility will hire more than 3,000 highly-skilled workers, the majority of whom already live in our area and other nearby parts of Oregon and southern Washington. The average salary during construction is upwards of \$75,000/yr or more, which is handedly above our county average. Further, the NEXT facility will create more than 240 permanent direct jobs and hundreds of ripple benefit jobs in our county. These new jobs will inevitably lead to more money spent in our retail and grocery stores, on tourism and local recreation, and with local non-profits and organizations. It means more grand openings and fewer "out of business" signs. It means success for our residents and stability for the workforce. A workforce, by the way, that will be centered around the green economy and 21st-century technology.

Beyond jobs, the \$2 billion NEXT project will generate \$16 million annually in tax revenue annually for vital county services. Again, this single project will benefit all residents of Columbia County by paying taxes that support local education, libraries, public safety, county health services, job training, road improvements, small business

assistance, building repair and so much more. Additionally, NEXT will pay more than \$5 million in annual Port fees that will help modernize our port to make it safer and more marketable for economic activity, which will in turn lead to more job creation and an expansion of our core economic engines that underpin our local tax base.

The Chamber and its members have been active participants in the public review process. We have participated in open houses, held our own information sessions and provided public comments into the record. We appreciate that NEXT is engaging stakeholders of all opinions – supporters, opponents and those who just want to know more.

NEXT is the kind of company we want operating in Columbia County. Please approve the NEXT air permit without delay.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "BreAnna Grissom". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

BreAnna Grissom, President
Rainier Chamber of Commerce