



Longview/Kelso Building Trades Council

Mike Bridges, President

Adam Davis, Recording Secretary

January 4, 2024

Board of Commissioners, Columbia County
Columbia County Land Development Services
Attn: Planning
230 Strand Street
St. Helens, OR 97051

Re: NEXT Renewable Fuels Local Land Use Permits

Dear Columbia County Commissioners:

The Longview/Kelso Building and Construction Trades Council supports NEXT Renewable Fuels' efforts to build a renewable diesel production facility at the Port of Columbia County's Port Westward site. We feel this project as a win-win opportunity for the local economy and the environment. Our Council represents Building Trades unions with skilled workers that live in Columbia County and adjacent counties that are excited about the opportunity to work on an amazing project like this close to home. Our Council affiliates and their members have rich history of helping build projects like this due to the proximity of a large skilled workforce in Cowlitz County that is very familiar with this type of industrial work. I myself have worked on several projects at the Port Westward site during my career.

Along with the 3,000 highly-skilled workers hired for the construction of the project, the NEXT facility will also create more than 240 permanent direct jobs and hundreds of ripple benefit jobs in our region. 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. The NEXT Renewable Fuels development will help Columbia County and Cowlitz County continue toward a healthy and sustainable local economy.

Our Council continues to support the NEXT Renewable Fuels project for the obvious environmental and economic benefits, but in closing would like to stress the following points below relative to the Local Land Use Permit:

- The County has already decided that the NEXT Renewable Diesel facility can and should be constructed. These applications further that decision by ensuring adequate multimodal transportation availability.
- A rail connection to this facility has been part of the design since it was first discussed with the County in 2020 and NEXT has been open about what rail could be used for.
- NEXT will contribute more than \$16 million annually in local tax revenue and \$5.5 million in port fees, which can support vital county services, taxing district projects and port modernization. This could lead to additional union work to improve infrastructure in the region.

I respectfully ask the Board of Commissioners to approve NEXT permits without delay so we can start building a cleaner future for our communities.

Sincerely,

Mike Bridges
President LKBCTC
360-431-1472