



**COLUMBIA
ECONOMIC
TEAM**

Board

Tony Hyde

Board President

Knife River

Bob Short

Board Treasurer

CalPortland

Nina Carlson

Board Secretary

NW Natural

Joe Backus

City of Scappoose

Robert Blumberg

Wauna Credit Union

Sean Clark

Port of Columbia

County

Casey Garrett

Columbia County

Commission

Marc Farmer

Clatskanie PUD

Deborah Hazen

Clatskanie Cultural

Center

Betsy Johnson

Transwestern Aviation

Greg Hinkelman

City of Clatskanie

Dan Luckett

Global Partners

Dr. Karen Sanders

Portland Community

College

Michael Sykes

Columbia River PUD

John Walsh

City of St. Helens

Staff

Paul Vogel,

Executive Director

Wela Negelspach,

Administrative & Program

Manager

Jason Moon,

SBDC Director

Sierra Trass,

Small Business Specialist

PO Box 1653

St. Helens, OR 97051

(503) 410-1061

columbiaeconomicteam.com

January 7, 2024

Columbia County Board of Commissioners,
Columbia County Land & Development Services
230 Strand St
St. Helens, OR 97051

Re: NEXT Renewable Fuels – Columbia County Land Use Applications

Dear Commissioners:

On behalf of the Columbia Economic Team, a consortium of employers from manufacturing to local government and non-profit organizations across the entirety of Columbia County, Oregon, I am writing to express our unconditional support for the approval of the NEXT Renewable Fuels county land use permits. We advocate that the Columbia County Commissioners approve the permits on both substance and merit.

NEXT Renewables meets the straight-forward regulations for both application designs and has even redesigned its rail branch proposal to meet both the county regulations and the recommendations made by the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals in their 2023 ruling.

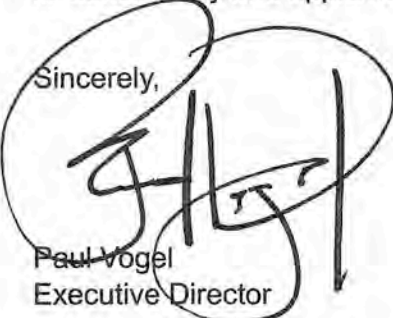
Port Westward is one of only five deep-water ports in Oregon and has been zoned for industrial uses (RIPD zone) since the County adopted its current comprehensive plan in 1984. These applications would facilitate industrial uses on land that has been planned for industrial operations and support use of the deep-water port for the economic benefit of the region. Further, the County has already approved the major permit for NEXT/NXT Clean Energy to build its clean fuels facility, and these applications align with that decision by ensuring reasonable multi-modal transportation optionality. The applications improve both the design of the facility to conform to state and local regulations, and they provide for a major improvement to local roads (Hermo Road) as a benefit to the company, to local residents, and to agricultural and farming activities in the area.

While complying with county land use regulations and providing the backbone of green fuels production in Oregon, NEXT Renewables will create more than 3,000 family-wage jobs during construction and more than 240 jobs during operation – all foundational for the green economy. The growth of green jobs and incorporation of qualified trades labor is a model for 21st-century industry in Oregon, and it's something Oregonians hear, and expect, from regional leaders.

Our organization is responsible for economic development in all of Columbia County. Economic development is not just about jobs at any cost, or even just about jobs. Responsible economic development is about encouraging investment by businesses that are environmentally responsible, sustainable, and economically beneficial, that protect our communities and also provide jobs and economic

stimulus. Columbia Economic Team is proud to join with city, county and state elected officials, Port commissioners, the Oregon Building Trades, Southwest Mountain Regional Council of Carpenters, Oregon AFL-CIO, business advocacy groups, community members from each Columbia County city and unincorporated area. Thousands of Oregonians throughout the state support the NEXT Renewable Fuels investment. We join with them to urge the Columbia County Commission to uphold its consistency and approve these permit applications without delay.

Sincerely,



Paul Vogel
Executive Director