



January 18, 2022

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Columbia County Board of Commissioners
Chair Margaret Magruder
Commissioner Henry Heimuller
Commissioner Casey Garrett
C/o Columbia County Land Services
Delivered electronically

Re: NEXT Renewable Fuels; Application DR 21-03 and V 21-05 and Application CU 21-04

Madame Chair and Commissioners,

This testimony is presented with the authorization of the Board of Directors of the Columbia Economic Team, a public-private organization serving the entirety of Columbia County.

Thank you for the opportunity to advocate in support of the proposed land use action and the substantial benefit that the applicant project, NEXT Renewable Fuels, will bring to the area, the county as a whole, our region, state, and national and global interests. In our view, the application should be approved. Why? It makes land use sense. It makes economic sense. It makes environmental sense. It makes common sense.

It makes land use sense, for these reasons and more:

At the most basic level, the NEXT Renewable Fuels facility is consistent, and aligns with, County zoning and land use, and therefore should be approved.

Further, the NEXT Renewable Fuels facility aligns with the Port of Columbia County's maritime trade and industrial development mission, purpose, and zoning for the proposed land, and its use of the land for these purposes should be approved.

This water-dependent manufacturing and shipping makes good use of existing maritime facilities ideally positioned to support local and international commerce. By building in an appropriately industrially zoned area prime for clean fuels production, NEXT will partner with existing and future Port tenants to minimize impacts to local road and rail traffic, while serving markets up and down the U.S. west coast. California, Oregon, and Washington have all passed aggressive clean fuels standards with renewable diesel being a key component of meeting those goals. It is expected that other states and countries will follow suit, building demand for maritime commerce.

The facility will be sited on vacant land already zoned Rural Industrial Planned Development, or RIPD, because it is dependent upon river and rail transportation that, within Columbia County, are only available together at Port Westward. It is consistent with industrial and energy production already established and operating responsibly at Port Westward. The lands were designated accordingly, and this application should be approved.

Because it is appropriate and consistent with County land use planning, this facility is valuable as exactly the sort of beneficial use for which Port Westward is intended and has been developed to serve: river-dependent uses that take advantage of the exceptional asset this deep-water port, existing marine terminals, and industrial employment lands. Anticipating and building to supply the US and global market with clean fuels is a strategic economic and climate priority.

The RIPD zoning specifically allows "production, processing, assembling, packaging, or treatment of materials; research and development laboratories; and storage and distribution of services and facilities." This is what NEXT Renewables will be doing; it's an appropriate land use.

According to the County's own Comprehensive Plan and Zone Code, this zoning is appropriate for uses that take advantage of river and rail access, and which may "require a rural location in order to take advantage of adequate rail and/or vehicle and/or deep-water port and/or airstrip access." That is what NEXT Renewables needs and represents; this project is appropriate for current zoning.

This land use makes economic sense.

Population, economic and job growth in north county have been stagnant for decades, even recently declining. During that time, millions has been invested in infrastructure to accommodate industrial development, jobs, and economic growth. Still, we see declines. These are industrially zoned employment lands. That's what they should be used for.

Manufacturing in north county, like Rightline and Global partners, are foundational to the economy and the county's tax base. Our county needs more manufacturing sited on industrially zoned employment lands.

The green product NEXT Renewables will manufacture makes this investment all that much more important. For Columbia County and Port Westward to tie into US West Coast and global markets in the green economy is an optimal use of the industrial employment lands.

The NEXT Renewables investment will generate local economic opportunities and create and sustain jobs. NEXT will create more than 3,500 construction jobs and more than 240 permanent jobs in community that is already a manufacturing-centric economy, and an industry and facility that are anticipated to operate in Columbia County for 80 years or more.

NEXT Renewables will bring a new, green energy producer to our region and make Port Westward a clean fuels hub on the west coast of the United States. That's prudent and appropriate use of both the land and maritime facilities.

Producing clean fuels in Columbia County will employ hundreds of residents in the Green Economy, benefitting both our environment and our economy.

The NEXT Renewables fuels manufacturing facility will help diversify and significantly strengthen our regional economy.

The manufacturing industry has the highest multiplier effect of any economic sector: for every \$1 spent in manufacturing, another \$2.74 is added to the economy. Nearly tripling the dollar effect of a \$2b investment means even more jobs in a diversified economy.

Growing this industry will lead to long-term, well-paying jobs and job training in clean fuels, support all aspects of local business, generate traded sector economic multipliers throughout our region, and enhance the marketability of our area and the Port district to attract additional related clean-energy investment to our region

This investment also will provide a substantial public financial return. NEXT Renewables is a \$2 billion investment that yields roughly \$5.5 million annually in port leases and fees and hundreds of millions in annual tax revenue for local government and all public districts.

In addition to appropriate land use compatibility, the NEXT Renewables project is subject to all local, state, and federal regulatory and permitting requirements, with which it is complying. As part of this robust, multi-level oversight, this application certainly complies with county zoning and should be approved by the Board of Commissioners.

This project makes environmental sense.

The NEXT Renewables project is protecting, enhancing, and sustaining the environment in multiple, beneficial ways.

The NEXT Renewables facility aligns with and supports the state of Oregon's Low Carbon Fuel Standards, Clean Air Oregon standards, and economic development priority for creating traded sector employment. Contributing significantly to those important public policy goals with a valid and appropriate use of the land creates even greater cumulative benefit from this project investment.

NEXT will create more than 450 acres of thriving, biologically diverse and sustainable wetlands that benefit the local ecosystem. This assessment has been confirmed by the Oregon Department of State Lands and is completely consistent with both federal and state wetland mitigation goals. These wetlands sit within an RIPD-zoned area and are appropriate for industrial development.

The renewable diesel produced by NEXT Renewables will displace -- be a replacement for -- traditional fossil fuel diesel, significantly decreasing greenhouse gas emissions.

NEXT Renewables will ship its product in bulk by barge and oceangoing vessel, achieving economic efficiencies and reducing transportation emissions.

A full carbon emission Life Cycle Analysis demonstrates that the NEXT Renewables operation provides a net positive benefit to our environment and the conditions of climate change.

On behalf of the business and organizations represented countywide by the Columbia Economic Team, we urge the Board of Commissioners to approve NEXT's land use applications so this project can move forward through the rigorous state and federal regulatory process and realize its economic and environmental benefits for us all.

Respectfully,



Paul Vogel
Executive Director