Former Chamber President Endorses Crude By Rail

Local News

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The following editorial was submitted by Leroy Tipton, former longtime Chamber of Commerce President.

f Grays Harbor have time and again seized the opportunities before us. If we had not, in light of our many setbacks, we would b

The founders of Grays Harbor wisely took advantage of their opportunities for growth and job development. One very impressive example is how Aberdeen got its first railroad. In January 1888, the ship Abercorn, full of railroad steel, wrecked off the Washington coast four miles north of Oyehut. Aberdeen citizens, in 1891-92, built a 1400 ft dock from the beach to the ship wreck to salvage the rail. In 1894 the citizens and businesses of Aberdeen banded together to lay the rails and connect them with the rail east of town (rail was already extended to Montesano and Cosmopolis from Centralia.) The mills provided the ties, and Aberdeen founder, Sam Benn, gave city lots to the laborers. They turned the completed track over to the Northern Pacific in 1895. There were 700 people present to celebrate, with the Aberdeen band providing the music, when the first passenger train arrived that April. Now 118 years later, the people of Grays Harbor should seize the opportunity to support the proposals to ship petroleum from the Port of Grays Harbor. New fields in North Dakota are feeding crude to refineries on the West Coast. With its rail access and deep-water port, our Port is ideal for this task.

This opportunity will bring our region jobs, economic development and tax revenue for vital public services like schools, public safety, roads and other infrastructure. Heroic Hoquiamite, Frank Lamb pushed the state to develop Port Districts and the people of Grays Harbor seized that opportunity and developed the second Port District in the state. The Port has been one of the key engines for our economy since its founding in 1911. As we have struggled with persistently high unemployment, especially these last years; it’s the diversity at the Port that has kept us from experiencing an even deeper recession Leaders of our Port know it needs to handle a variety of products and materials to and from global markets because the markets for such goods and commodities change over time. The Port once was the leading export for U.S. grown timber; it now leads the U.S. in exports of American soybean meal and also ships biodiesel, automobiles and other goods. So we must continue to diversify the products and materials we ship – it’s the only way we can ensure a long and sustainable future for our region. Petroleum shipments are certainly not new to Grays Harbor. The Port of Grays Harbor handled petroleum products of some sort (gasoline, diesel, bunker fuel, etc.) from before 1923 through 1989. The Harbor had about 200 vessels shipping petroleum during 1970 – 1982 - our busiest time for such cargo. Imperium Grays Harbor has handled liquid bulk cargo since 2007, and Westway Terminals, who have done this

successfully all over the world for more than a century, have moved liquid bulk here since 2009. Some in the community are wary of increased vessel traffic moving through our waters. Sensible people agree it is critical that we establish safe and sound operating practices for this new business opportunity for the community. These facilities must meet stringent and comprehensive requirements for safety and environmental protection before any development can begin. The Washington Department of Ecology, the City of Hoquiam, the U.S. Coast Guard and many other agencies require a thorough permitting process that includes public engagement and involvement before any one of these projects can move forward. Because of its rich marine resources, Washington has some of the highest standards in the nation for such development. We can enable growth and its benefits without sacrificing the natural beauty and bounty of the water’s edge. It will require a careful blend of information, regulation, collaboration, and, ultimately, recognition that we can find ways to stimulate growth in a safe and environmentally responsible manner. Together we can get this done, and bring the benefits to our community. Let’s seize the opportunity before us to ship petroleum products through the Port.LeRoy TiptonAberdeen, WA 98520