



Randy Mueller

COMMISSION CHOOSES NEXT CEO

While not quite official at this newsletter's press deadline, it soon will be: Randy Mueller is expected to be hired to pick-up the CEO mantle beginning January 1. He'll replace Brent Grening, who's retiring January 3.

Mueller is no stranger to the Port of Ridgefield; he worked as Director of Business Development from 2007 to 2014, departing Ridgefield to take the job of CEO for the Port of Chehalis; a position he held for seven years. He's enthusiastic about the opportunity to take the helm at Ridgefield's port.

"I'm thrilled to be returning to Ridgefield and Clark County," Mueller said. "This community is very special and it's exciting to continue the great work done by this port."

Mueller noted Grening was his professional

mentor in the port world. "Brent leaves me with some very big shoes to fill," Mueller said, "but I'm confident the next chapter of the port's history will be as great as its last."

While at the Port of Chehalis Mueller led a two-year strategic planning effort to align with objectives of the port commission, developed new partnerships, significantly increased operating revenues, filled all vacant properties, and constructed the first new building there in 20 years.

Mueller holds a B.A. from Washington State University, a Master of Real Estate Development from Portland State University, and an Executive Master of Public Administration from University of Washington.

FROM THE COMMISSION

Scott Hughes
Commissioner



MUELLER RIGHT FOR OUR PORT, COMMUNITY

As port commissioners we've been unbelievably fortunate to have an intelligent, visionary, and productive leader as Port CEO for nearly 24 years – yes, you read that correctly – 24 years! With current CEO Brent Grening heading to his long-planned retirement in early January, our commission has been working through a succession plan and hiring process to find the right person to be the Port's next great leader. We believe we've found that person in Randy Mueller, who will replace Brent as Port CEO.

Many of you remember Randy as the port's former business development director, a position he successfully managed for around seven years. With no upward mobility opportunities at the Port of Ridgefield, Randy looked outward and was hired as the CEO for the Port of Chehalis eight years ago. While in that role, my fellow commissioners and I have been impressed with his economic

development and community connection accomplishments there.

Randy brings more than newly gained port management experience with him back to Ridgefield. He also is intimately familiar with our community and its culture, has a home here, and has been wanting to return. Additionally, his appointment as CEO returns a degree of institutional memory to the Port – something we will lose when our longtime CEO departs.

At the Port, we're very happy to be on the receiving end of Randy's leadership abilities and his enthusiasm for all things Ridgefield– we think our community will be, too.

We encourage you to welcome Randy back to Ridgefield when he rejoins our team.

FALL 2021
INSIDE >>



INNOVATION CENTER DEMAND
LEADS PORT TO ADD
MARAEE & PETERSON

4

SNEAK TO THE PEAK

RIDGEFIELD CELEBRATES RAIL OVERPASS COMPLETION!

The Port of Ridgefield celebrated the completion of the Pioneer Street Rail Overpass on Sept. 11 with its Sneak to the Peak event. Although the overpass wouldn't officially open for another week, the port's event coincided with other community events billed as "Ridgefield's Really BIG Day". On Sept. 17, vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists could all make the trek across the overpass. The project was big on vision and a long time in-the-making.

Over 20 years ago Port Commissioner Joe Melroy posited that a rail overpass would be a good thing for Ridgefield. Port CEO Brent Grening remembers the moment. "There had been accidents and deaths on the tracks," Grening said. "In talking about it one day Commissioner Melroy said if we want the Ridgefield waterfront to be a safe place to visit, we need a rail overpass. We agreed, so as the only local agency empowered to do this kind of work, we ran with it."

The project would prove to be a daunting one. The millions of dollars in funding required would have to be raised from state and federal sources, and federal and state agencies and BNSF Railway required necessary permits and approval. Also, the presence of White Tail deer in the Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge required a second environmental impact study causing a months-long construction delay. But at last, the rail overpass can be crossed off the port's to-do list!



During the celebration of the Pioneer Street Rail Overpass completion on Sept. 11, people gathered under warm, blue skies to listen to the words of several speakers.



Directly after the port's Sneak to the Peak event on Sept. 11 to celebrate the completion of the Pioneer Street Rail Overpass, elected officials and others participated in a ribbon cutting event. From left: Laurie Olin, Port of Ridgefield Vice President of Operations; Rep. Larry Hoff; Bruce Wiseman, Port of Ridgefield Commissioner; Don Stose, City of Ridgefield Mayor; Scott Hughes, Port of Ridgefield Commission Chair; Rep. Brandon Vick, and Joe Melroy, Port of Ridgefield Commissioner.



At the Port of Ridgefield's Sneak to Peak event on Sept. 11, a train did just what it's supposed to do now: it traveled UNDER the overpass!



At the port's Sneak to the Peak event on Sept. 11 to celebrate the completion of the Pioneer Street Rail Overpass, the Port of Ridgefield Commission and CEO presented an award to Laurie Olin, Vice President of Operations. Olin was honored for her 21-year commitment to the community and port. Her contributions included the construction of the Pioneer Street Rail Overpass and the port's 20-year waterfront clean-up. From left: Joe Melroy, Port of Ridgefield Commissioner; Laurie Olin, Port of Ridgefield Vice President of Operations; Scott Hughes, Port of Ridgefield Commission Chair; Bruce Wiseman, Port of Ridgefield Commissioner and Brent Grening, Port of Ridgefield CEO.

"We so appreciate our state and federal legislators. They all supported this project to help us get funding."

Scott Hughes, Commission Chair
Port of Ridgefield

"This safety project is a great example of what we can do when we all work together."

Sen. Ann Rivers

"The community works so well together to build things – I'm excited to see what else Ridgefield can do."

Rep. Brandon Vick



THANK YOU
to the many individuals and agencies that helped make the rail overpass a reality!

U.S. Congressional Legislators
Senator Patty Murray
Senator Maria Cantwell
Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler

Washington State Legislators
Curtis King
Judy Clibborn
Larry Hoff
Brandon Vick
Senator Ann Rivers

Washington State Department of Transportation
Carolyn Simmonds
Michael Williams
Keith Molyneux
Nils Robe

City of Ridgefield
City Council Members
Steve Stuart
Bryan Kast

U.S. Department of Transportation

U.S. Federal Rail Administration

BNSF Railway
Stephen Semenick

Regional Transportation Council
Matt Ransom
Dale Robin
Lynda Davies
Dean Lookingbill

Jacobs Engineering
Shawn Henry
Aaron Sherry
Kevin Kim
Ed Blodget

FROM THE CEO

Brent Grening
CEO

RAIL OVERPASS: A TRUE COMMUNITY PROJECT

CONGRATULATIONS RIDGEFIELD, YOU DID IT AGAIN!

The Ridgefield rail overpass is now open – and it appears many of you have come down just to drive over it. I hope you're as proud of it as we are. You may not realize it, but you had a hand in it.

The overpass is the latest Port project that is truly for Ridgefield, by Ridgefield. Why? Because twenty-something years ago, community members and then-new Port Commissioner Joe Melroy put the idea of a rail overpass up for consideration as a community project. The Port Commission chose to pursue it, and the idea took hold.

Local engineers sketched concepts and lined out the project. Local legislators and our U.S. senators helped get planning dollars in place. With funds the project became real; we worked with citizens to determine the best location and configuration. Local planners, engineers and designers developed the plan. When it went out to bid it was awarded to Tapani – a local north county

construction company.

What's remarkable about the overpass is that it was built in, for and by people in north county. This is important because the Port is a strong proponent of local jobs, local investment and local people working to build the community in which they live. The rail overpass is a testament to this core Port tenet.

What's more, during construction local kids watched their parents (literally) building the community they will inherit. Local people built a lasting piece of community infrastructure and taught the next generation a valuable "can do" lesson.

IT3 is next up. Again, local citizens, business owners, entrepreneurs and youth will come together to build a similar, but very different piece of community infrastructure – the IT3 Innovation Center. With IT3 the Port will bring the next chapter of north county's economic prosperity to life for a future that will be built in, for and by the people who live here.

PORT EXPANDS IT3 STAFF

The port's IT3 Innovation Center is gaining a great deal of steam. Interest in IT3 programs to enhance knowledge and skills in robotics, automation and other new or emerging technologies is high; corporations, K-12 schools and higher education systems in Clark County are embracing the proposed offerings. Funding, too, has been forthcoming, with grants and equipment committed to assist in getting phase 1 of the project off the ground.

To meet business and community demand for IT3, the port has recently added two industry experts to its staff, at right.

**DAVID PETERSON**

David Peterson was named IT3 Programs Director. He'll manage training, research, and automation innovation programs. In this role Peterson will provide industry and community members knowledge and skills surrounding new technologies, and foster interest in new career areas.

Peterson will install and integrate equipment to allow IT3 staff and businesses to work together, collecting relevant data to make informed decisions.

"One of my jobs is to show people how modern technology works in ways that really mean something to them, leading to greater efficiencies and cost savings," Peterson said. "Technology should be shown as more than just magic that requires special skills to understand."

Peterson likens his IT3 teaching role as that of a translator.

"As educators, we're not inventing new technologies, we're helping people understand how to make the technology work."

Peterson was previously an Associate Professor in Electronics, Robotics and Automation at Centralia College. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering and certificates in Mechatronics and Nanotechnology from WSU Vancouver.

**MOHAMMED MARAE**

Mohammed Maraee's position is Director of Corporate Relations. His IT3 role is to create partnerships with companies involved in automation and robotics. He'll work to establish a supercluster of innovation that serves as a technology hub and pipeline between businesses, the regional workforce, and K-12 systems.

"Our aim is to create a technically savvy population in the Pacific Northwest," Maraee said. "We will be building workforce capacity and sustainability for area businesses, and offering a tangible employment outcome for area students."

Maraee is a business professor who was involved in the initial development of the Oregon Manufacturing Innovation Center in Scappoose. He was later hired by Everett Community College to run the State of Washington's Center of Excellence for Semiconductors & Electronic Manufacturing.

Maraee is on the final leg of completing a PhD in Business Administration.

COMMISSIONERS

Scott Hughes • Chairman
Joe Melroy • Treasurer
Bruce Wiseman • Secretary

ADVISORS

Bill Eling • Port Counsel
Susan Trabucco • Communications
Susan Spence • Graphic Design

STAFF

Brent Grening • CEO
Laurie Olin • VP Operations
Kevin Witte • VP Innovation & Dev.
Matt Rosenberger • Accounting Mgr.
Ethan Perry • Business Development
Wonder Baldwin • Admin. Assistant
Kevin Oldham • Maintenance Supervisor
Mohammed Maraee • Dir. of Corporate Relations, IT3
David Peterson • Programs Dir. IT3

PORTWORKS

is published quarterly by the Port of Ridgefield. © 2021

Find it on our website, around town and in the Reflector newspaper on the 2nd Wednesday of January, April, July & October.

FOLLOW US
Facebook & Twitter

111 West Division St,
Ridgefield, WA 98642
360.887.3873
portridgefield.org



**PORT OF
RIDGEFIELD**
WASHINGTON