

August 26, 2020

Port of Hoodspport
c/o Commissioner Booth, Commissioner Brazil, and Commissioner Petz
PO Box 429
Hoodspport, WA 98548

RE: Public Restrooms

Dear Commissioners,

The Shelton Mason Chamber of Commerce supports all of the businesses of Hoodspport and their economic development. This letter addresses the importance of the public restrooms in Hoodspport and the adverse impact on the income and economic development of the businesses in Hoodspport, should the Port choose to permanently close the public restrooms.

The primary source of income for most of the Hoodspport businesses is tourism. Some visitors arrive by boat, but most arrive by driving. Nearly all of them need to use a restroom, either upon arrival or before their departure. Few people can partake in travel, shopping, and dining in Hoodspport without the need to use a restroom.

In a survey conducted by the Port of Hoodspport, the community overwhelmingly responded that their highest priority was restroom facilities. Accordingly, restrooms were built. The need was greater than anticipated, causing the system to fail.

The enormous need for public restrooms, and the associated difficulties in maintaining them, has attributed to the Port expressing its desire to “get out of the bathroom business.” This is not an acceptable option. When the need is greater than expected, you rise to meet the need. The Port of Hoodspport’s mission *is to create, promote, and support economic development that supports the preservation and public enjoyment of local, cultural, and natural resources, provides family wage jobs, local services, and promotes the development of cottage industries, tourism, and family-related activities.* The need for restrooms will not disappear. The Port’s desire to be rid of public restrooms does not support a healthy economy, cottage industries, tourism or family-related activities. To close the public restrooms hinders all of those goals.

The Port has also expressed an interest in passing along the “bathroom business” to the local shop owners. Closing the restrooms temporarily and/or operating with limited hours, has already created challenges for the business community – including arguments among business owners on how, where, and when to offer restroom facilities.

The businesses in Hoodspport succeed, in part, because they recommend each other to their customers. Many customers are recommended to local restaurants by the wineries and distillery. In turn, customers are referred to the wineries and the distillery by the gift shops and art galleries. When disputes arise amongst the owners, cross referrals diminish, negatively affects a healthy economy and the business community.

The Chamber urges the Port to reconsider its desire to get “out of the bathroom businesses” and instead support the economic development of Hoodspport by providing a solution. The public has told you their top priority is public bathrooms. It is the Chamber’s understanding that the Port has several options, and that all of them are time sensitive for various reasons.

A feasible long-term option is available. The Port has a current solution; a design by Brian Sund that addresses the current system’s failed drain field. The ability to utilize this plan may change if Mason County institutes new standards in October.

There are two locations available to implement this design. The Port can exercise its right to use the reserve drain field in its lease, although the deadline to exercise that option is approaching. The Port has the legal authority and a public responsibility to exercise the option, should no other option be deemed reasonable.

The second location is adjoining land offered to the Port of Hoodspport for a drain field by Mason County. A neighboring landowner has voiced concern about the drain field affecting her well but has not offered proof. Due process should be followed to determine whether the concern is valid.

The short-term solution is to pump the tanks on a weekly basis. The Port has estimated that the cost would be \$10,000 a year, based on the high use during tourism season. There are resources that the Port should explore to help with the payment of the pumping costs. These costs should not fall solely on the business community as a healthy economy is beneficial to the public at large.

The Chamber strongly urges the Port to continue to provide restrooms for the town of Hoodspport, both in the short term and in the long term by solving the drain field issues. Solutions are currently available. To allow these options to expire is an active choice against providing the services that your community has expressed as its top priority.

The Shelton-Mason County Chamber of Commerce is committed to help provide solutions to the business community and citizens of Hoodspport. Should the Port of Hoodspport need support, we are willing to assist.

Sincerely,



Heidi McCutcheon
Executive Director