

Jeffrey Bishop
Executive director, Port of Moses Lake

Meet

Jeffrey Bishop

By Tim Kukes

Executive Director for the Port of Moses Lake

Jeffrey Bishop is a man possessed with intelligence and a subtle sense of humor. He is also a man who seeks out opportunity to create the best from any situation.

It explains his arrival at the Port of Moses Lake as the new executive director.

Bishop was a college football athlete, but suffered an injury that left him unable to play. It created a dilemma of what to do next and personal circumstances dictated that he graduate quickly to enter the working world. Consulting with academic advisors, it was suggested that municipal management would be the route to go. For backing into a career, Bishop said he loves it.

In the early 90s, Bishop was the first city administrator for Connell, Wash. He has also worked for the City of Seattle in the attorney's office, the Port of Pasco as director of properties and development, and the Port of Tacoma as manager of industrial development. He was also CEO of the Oregon International Port of Coos Bay and until recently, city manager of Miami, Okla.

"I've actually spent more time in the port industry than the municipal industry," Bishop said. "Though it is pretty close. That's not really a good sign because it means I am getting old."

Bishop was one of four final candidates to be considered for the executive director of the Port of Moses Lake position. According to port Commissioner Stroud Kunkel, Bishop's prior experience in municipal and port management, and his mind for approaching problems from a strong analytical and financial view point were factors in selecting him for the position – and one other thing.

"He was familiar with the area, which for us was pretty good because whenever we've had a director that came from outside the area they didn't last very long," Kunkel said. "It's quite an adjustment for somebody coming from a larger city or metropolitan area to Moses Lake."

Bishop said he left the Columbia Basin for career opportunities

and had always regretted that decision. Now with his children in the Pacific Northwest, his daughter lives in Coos Bay, Oregon while his son lives in Seattle – he saw the opportunity to be closer to them.

"One of the things I really like about the Columbia Basin, and I didn't know I missed it until I experienced it, is the mornings – the mornings are heaven here," Bishop said. "The temperature, especially in the summer, is perfect. There's no rain and the skies are clear, it's quiet and there is just a uniqueness about it. I am not sure if that is marketable."

Perhaps it is. Moses Lake has 340 days of sun a year, which makes it stand out for those interested in flying aircraft.

Bishop said it was a little early to talk about exact goals and projects; that it takes some time to develop an appreciation and understanding of the uniqueness of a place.

"I talk about it a lot in the context of a football game plan," Bishop said. "You draw up your game plan and design your plays, but they never seem to come off exactly like that and a good running-back will sit back, be patient, wait and look for the hole before they start running through it."

Bishop is excited though about the Port of Moses Lake's "fundamentals." These fundamentals include easy transportation access, abundant supply of land, lack of environmental complications, and relatively low traffic. In addition, Bishop mentions two other items unique to Grant County and the Port of Moses Lake: inexpensive power and one of the port's outstanding features – the second longest runway in the western portion of the United States.

"I think Grant County speaks to something I always thought was really the true cornerstone of economic development, and that's the low cost of operation here really adds to the bottom line of most business's business model," Bishop said. "A lot of states think you have to throw huge incentives to entice a company to their location, but the reality is if you want a company there for the

long-term you got to be able to show a substantial profit in your company."

The arrival of the new executive director comes at an exciting time for the port. Not only is the industrial side of the port going strong with the presence of such companies as Genie, Moses Lake Industries and AstraREAL, but on the aviation side AeroTEC has partnered with the Mitsubishi Aircraft Corporation to conduct flight tests of Mitsubishi's new Mitsubishi Regional Jet 90s. To facilitate the project, AeroTEC will be building a new 65,000 square foot hangar – which happens to be adjacent to the port's newly completed ramp project.

"The owner of this company (AeroTEC) that is sinking \$8.5 to \$9 million – private dollars – into a new hangar in Moses Lake is here in some small part because we have been updating the infrastructure of the airport," said Patrick Jones, outgoing executive director of the Port of Moses Lake.

Jones also said that relations with Port of Moses Lake tenants and Big Bend Community College are strong and that Bishop has some interesting ideas for working with the community college.

"Jeff (Bishop) is someone who really does see opportunities in slightly different ways and pursues them in creative entrepreneurial ways," Jones said. "He has a particular affection for the Columbia Basin and understands what we got here – an industrial and

aviation – complex and I think he will not just manage the facilities as they exist and help our tenants grow, but see opportunities to attract new tenants – and then make them happen."

There was a budget meeting scheduled for the end of the month where Bishop expects to get a fuller picture of commissioners' priorities for the port.

Bishop understands the need to continually invest in the infrastructure of a facility and the reality of having to pay for such investment. He calls himself "a rock-turner" and intends to look at all opportunities for the Port of Moses Lake.

Continued maintenance and improvement of existing infrastructure is an important issue, Kunkel said. Another issue that the port faces is the lack of rail to

the facilities. According to Kunkel, there has been repeated interest in rail at the port.

"That's a \$25 million project, so it's not one we can handle internally," Kunkel said. "We're going to need to get grants or partners."

Bishop is excited about the future though. With the inherent benefits to business in Grant County and new partners like Mitsubishi with their track record for success the future does look bright for the Port of Moses Lake.

"I'm just really beaming that I got such good fundamentals," Bishop said. "It's been a long time since I have had an asset like this to work with."



Tiffany Sukola photo

Pictured L to R: Stroud Kunkle, David "Kent" Jones, Mike Conley and Jeffrey Bishop executive director, Port of Moses Lake

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