

Quincy port investigating state zone designation

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QUINCY — The Port of Quincy is investigating the possibility of applying to the state for an Innovation Partnership Zone designation.

A zone allows the port and city to qualify for state funding that could create economic development and attract companies to the area, said Pat Boss, the port's business development consultant.

The port can apply for the designation because of a recent change to the law, which dropped the requirement of having a four-year research institution in the zone.

The area's fiber-optics, proximity to Moses Lake and Wenatchee and low cost power are attributes that make the area attractive, he said.

At this point, the port's main goal is to gather input from stakeholders in the business and education communities.

No decisions have been made regarding a theme, partners or the exact geographical area in the zone.

The port would likely administer the zone, but could partner with another entity as well.

Other zones have partnered with four-year schools and Battelle.

"It's really depends what we come up with during our investigative process and feasibility study," he commented. "We're trying to figure out what would be the best fit."

Grant County is designated a Historically Underutilized Business Zone by the federal government.

"What the government is saying is our county needs more economic development and family wage jobs," Boss said.

The last time zones were funded by the state was in 2007.

Boss said he doesn't expect there to be a lot of money available for the program, but that it's key to write an application that makes sense.

Then the port could apply for state and federal funds once they become available.

A zone would help drive research dollars to the area as there's "no research nexus in Grant County," he noted.

In Washington state, there are 11 zones. They are the Waterfront Innovation Zone, Port of Bellingham, Grays Harbor Sustainable Industries Innovation Partnership Zone, Port of Grays Harbor, Pullman Innovation Partnership Zone, Port of Whitman County, Spokane University District Innovation District Partnership Zone, Greater Spokane Incorporated, Walla Walla Valley Innovation Partnership Zone, City of Walla Walla, Everett Aerospace Convergence Zone, Snohomish County, North Olympia Peninsula Innovation Partnership Zone, Sequim, Bothell Biomedical Manufacturing Corridor, City of Bothell, Discovery Corridor Innovation Zone/Steinmueller Innovation Park, Vancouver, South Lake Union Life Science Innovation Partnership Zone, Seattle and Tri-Cities Innovation Zone, Port of Benton.