

IR HERALD

Preview — Tahuya — Mason Lake — South Shore — Victor

Section of The Shelton-Mason County Journal

Port of Tahuya given 120 days to go out of business

A Mason County Superior Court judge has signed off on a deal to dissolve the Port of Tahuya, ending years of rancorous legal battles, recall efforts and community strife. The port district was established at the Great Bend of Hood Canal in 1925.

Judge James Sawyer negotiated the deal in Shelton on Monday in what was expected to be a public hearing. Instead, though, attorneys for the port, commissioner Brad Carey and a group of residents met behind closed doors for about an hour to hammer out the deal. No public testimony was given.

THE PORT, which collects about \$25,000 a year in taxes now

has 120 days to get its affairs in order. Chief among those seems to be a lawsuit by former commissioner Cindy Olsen. She was eventually recalled by voters, but not before an unsuccessful recall effort that was rejected by the Washington State Supreme Court. Olsen now wants to recoup her legal fees for that successful defense of the first recall attempt.

Also of concern to many port residents is the fate of Mennard's Landing, a popular public park owned by the port that sits at the mouth of Rendsland Creek on Hood Canal. It appears that Mason County will now take possession of the park, with no immediate plans to make any changes to it.

The petition to dissolve the port came in November with the support of commissioners Jim Christen and Brad Smith. The move was opposed by commissioner Brad Carey who accused his fellow commissioners of moving too quickly to dissolve the port while possibly violating the state's open meetings laws.

CAREY HAD earlier led efforts to get rid of a highly controversial public access plan and the subsequent legal battles and recall efforts.

The port still could face other claims in the next 120 days, but any cash assets that remain in the end will go to the North Mason School District.