
From: Hall, James[/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=9475D8F983174759A506988F86 F2BEA2-JAMESHALL]
Sent: Wed 10/11/2023 6:55:02 PM (UTC-04:00)
To: Fox, Charles [REDACTED] Mann, Melissa [REDACTED]
Cc: Pollman, Howard [REDACTED]
Subject: Fwd: [External] Niagara Shipyard
Attachment: 2023 Drydocking-Survey Cost Projections 9-25-23 (Survey Only).xlsx
Attachment: 2023 Shipyard Schedule Survey Only.docx

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From: William Sabatini [REDACTED] >
Sent: Wednesday, October 11, 2023 6:52 PM
To: Hall, James <[REDACTED]>
Subject: [External] Niagara Shipyard

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Jim,

PHMC requested that FNL bring the ship to shipyard. In the email you forwarded to me Melissa Mann stated that if FNL can come up with the funding to make it happen then PHMC would reimburse us upon completion. We have all worked very hard to make shipyard possible and raise the money needed to make it happen. The reasons you told me for not going are that it would be a waste of taxpayer dollars to put temporary fixed blade props on the ship. Again this was the PHMC plan that I created a shipyard plan around. You also said that PHMC is concerned with how late in the season it already is and if there were any delays in yard the ship could be held up by weather. We have known Niagara had to go shipyard this Fall since at least when you received the 835 concerning the Stem. We have also known that the props would need to be replaced in this yard period since July 10th. You and I both told the media that was the plan. The only reason we are in a situation where we are in the late part of the season is due to the delay in PHMC making the decision to send the ship to yard as planned. The current plan as I understand it is that the ship will get an in the water survey this Fall then go to shipyard in the Spring to get an out of the water survey. As you and I have discussed, delaying the out of the water portion of the survey by 6 months has a ripple effect.

The reason why this delay matters is in the timeline of getting USCG required work done. The main problem that must be addressed is the stem repair which we estimate could take 3 - 4 months. This is the potential timeline:

April 2024: Shipyard and out of water survey

May 2024: Receive survey report and recommendations

June 2024: PHMC review of survey and discussion of how to proceed

July 2024: Develop RFP

August/September 2024: RFP sent out

October 2024: Bids Opened

November 2024: Contract awarded

April-July 2025: Shipyard period to repair Stem. This does not include any other work that is identified in the survey that must be done.

It would then take 8 weeks to rig the ship so as you can see this delay would end not only the 2024 season but the 2025 season as well.

After you called yesterday to cancel our meeting and let me know that PHMC will not approve Niagara going to shipyard this Fall Chris Ellison called me. He was returning a call I had made to him concerning Lettie's shipyard period. I informed him that PHMC has decided not to send Niagara to shipyard this Fall. He reminded me that we have a scheduled dry dock inspection that is due by October 31st, 2023. As you remember this is something you and I discussed in our last meeting. I told you that we would have to ask for an extension for our COI which means an extension of when our required dry dock inspection would be. We also discussed the COI for the stem that says we are to make the repairs to the stem at that shipyard period. Chris Ellison told me that we can ask for an extension but "not wanting to go to shipyard for financial reasons" are not grounds for an extension. As a reminder our COI covers both underway operations as a Sailing School Vessel and dockside tours at the Erie Maritime Museum as an Attractions Vessel. When FNL agreed to not operate Lettie in 2020 at Charlie Fox's request we were required to surrender our COI for the ship because we would not be able to conduct our dry dock inspection or underway inspection. Niagara was able to go into lay up condition and maintain the COI but by the time we asked for the same thing for Lettie the rules had changed. If we need to surrender the COI for Niagara the ship would not be available for deck tours as was the case during the summer of 2021 when the ship was in lay up. Furthermore, Niagara does not meet the standards of a Sailing School Vessel and operates under exemptions granted by the USCG Port Captain in Buffalo in 2005. We may not be able to get those again which means Niagara may never sail again in her current configuration. She would need to be rebuilt to USCG standards to be able to sail in the future. Chris Ellison also informed me that PHMC has asked how to remove the Flagship Niagara League from the COI. If you could explain what this request is for I would appreciate it.

I asked yesterday for you to send me something in writing stating

PHMC's decision. I also asked to be included in the press release process before it went out. I haven't seen anything yet and after you told me that they have been emailing back and forth concerning this press release this morning I have informed the FNL board of PHMC's decision and the ramifications of that decision so that they hear from me before they see it in the news. Pat Harkins has also been informed as from what we discussed last week he has already been involved in this.

PHMC has been saying for 18 months they want Niagara to sail and they are committed to doing so. PHMC's actions do not reflect that statement. There have been delays in decisions and responses to FNL and these delays will be the reason Niagara if Niagara does not sail in 2024 and 2025. Furthermore if we lose the COI Niagara may not sail for many years to come and a new COI process will need to be started to get a new certificate as an attractions vessel only.

I am attending a Navy/Marine Corps Gala in Philadelphia tomorrow evening as I informed you of during our last meeting. I am attending at the request of Homecoming 250. They are hoping to introduce me to the Governor so I can stress the importance of Niagara being in Philadelphia representing the Commonwealth, and the Commonwealth's and Erie's strong connection to the US Navy as Linda described so well this morning at the marker dedication. This shipyard period is a part of the path that gets Niagara there.

The time has passed where we can get any props on the ship this Fall. I recommend that we bring the ship to shipyard and conduct the survey and our dry dock inspection as planned. I have attached an updated budget and timeline for your review. With this updated timeline and a departure date of October 23rd that gives us 23 days of contingency and still be back in Erie by the end of November.

I welcome your questions and comments. I request a response before I have the chance to speak to the Governor tomorrow evening.

Sincerely,

William Sabatini
Executive Director
Fleet Captain
Flagship Niagara League



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