



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM COMMISSION

300 NORTH STREET
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120-0024

(717) 787-2891

FAX (717) 783-9924

www.phmc.state.pa.us

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

December 12, 2023

BY ELECTRONIC MAIL and FIRST CLASS US MAIL – RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Michael Martin

President, Flagship Niagara League

150 E. Front Street, Suite 100

Erie, Pennsylvania 16507

William Sabatini

Executive Director, Flagship Niagara League

150 E. Front Street, Suite 100

Erie, Pennsylvania 16507

Re: U.S. Brig *Niagara* Operations

Dear Mike and Billy:

As you are aware, the current Contract for Services (MSC18134) between the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission (PHMC) and the Flagship Niagara League (FNL) expires on December 31, 2023. Please be advised that with the expiration of this agreement, FNL must cease all work with respect to the U.S. Brig *Niagara*. Future business between our organizations will require the full execution of a new contract. As such, PHMC will not be responsible for any *Niagara* operational expenses incurred by FNL beginning January 1, 2024.

Like FNL, PHMC believes that the best way to preserve a great ship is to sail it, and we plan to sail the *Niagara* for years to come. PHMC envisions the Erie Maritime Museum's future as a top-tier maritime history center, one that features an operational model that fully integrates *Niagara* operations and interpretation into the museum's programming and educational curriculum. Our goal is to present the Erie Maritime Museum and the U.S. Brig *Niagara* as a unified entity, providing dynamic educational experiences. Future sailing programs at the Erie Maritime Museum will promote *Niagara* as a destination for experiential learning and an ambassador of Pennsylvania's maritime history.

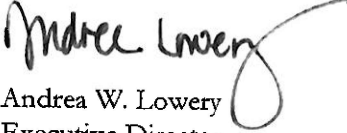
To achieve this vision, PHMC is committed to investing significant resources in the Erie Maritime Museum Complex, including the U.S. Brig *Niagara*. PHMC plans to fund major improvements to both the Museum and to *Niagara*. PHMC will also increase its investment in operations and programming. During 2024, PHMC will embark on a multi-million-dollar Commonwealth Capital Project to tackle *Niagara's* deferred maintenance and to make major systems upgrades. Moreover, we are planning a future multi-million-dollar Commonwealth Capital Project to design and install new permanent exhibits at the museum. In 2024, PHMC will also resume responsibility for hiring *Niagara's* professional crew. (This mirrors the management approach employed by PHMC from 1992 to 2009 and constitutes an additional annual investment of approximately \$400,000 in *Niagara's* operational budget.)

Although PHMC will resume direct management and operation of the U.S. Brig *Niagara*, our desire is to continue our working relationship with FNL. To meet our goals at the Erie Maritime Museum, we will need a support group to assist us with fundraising, marketing, and engaging the entrepreneurial spirit and support of the local community. We understand that FNL is currently completing a strategic planning process and exploring a diverse array of possibilities for the organization's programmatic future. PHMC would welcome the opportunity for a facilitated discussion on how our organizations could continue working together within PHMC's new operational framework for the Erie Maritime Museum and the U.S. Brig *Niagara*. If this would be of interest to FNL, please reach out to Jim Hall, Erie Maritime Museum Site Administrator, so that we can schedule a time for this conversation.

December 12, 2023

PHMC envisions a very bright future for the Erie Maritime Museum and the U.S. Brig *Niagara*. We truly appreciate the passion FNL has for *Niagara* and its significance to Erie and are grateful for the assistance FNL has provided over our years together. We are very hopeful that our organizations can forge a mutually beneficial relationship in support of the future of the museum and its dynamic educational programming. If you or your colleagues have any questions, please feel free to be in contact with Jim Hall.

Sincerely,


Andrea W. Lowery
Executive Director

Cc: Melissa Mann, Director of Historic Sites & Museums, PHMC
James Hall, Site Administrator, Erie Maritime Museum & U.S. Brig *Niagara*, PHMC
Hayley Haldeman, Chair, PHMC
Catherine Lantzy, Chief Counsel, PHMC