

MEMORANDUM

December 3, 2009

TO: MEMBERS, PORT COMMISSION
Hon. Rodney Fong, President
Hon. Stephanie Shakofsky, Vice President
Hon. Kimberly Brandon
Hon. Michael Hardeman
Hon. Ann Lazarus

FROM: Monique Moyer
Executive Director

SUBJECT: Informational Presentation regarding the National Park Service's (NPS) interest in developing an NPS Visitor Center including an Alcatraz Embarkation facility on the San Francisco Waterfront

DIRECTOR'S RECOMMENDATION: Informational only – No Action Required

SUMMARY

In recognition of the mission of the National Park Service (NPS) in both protecting and interpreting the natural, historic and scenic value of Alcatraz Island while providing for an improved, quality visitor experience, and in recognition of the value visitors to Alcatraz bring to the area immediately around their base of operations, NPS has approached the Port of San Francisco and requested information on five facilities for consideration as a permanent land-side home for an NPS visitor center for its many regional destinations while serving as their Alcatraz embarkation site. NPS is seeking a stable, long-term property agreement (to be implemented after expiration of its current concession agreement) to eliminate the disruption to park visitors that currently occurs from the periodic relocation of the embarkation site.

BACKGROUND

From the very first tourist vessel in 1973, the Port of San Francisco has served as the embarkation point for millions of tourists and locals intent on visiting the former U.S Army brig and federal prison constituting NPS' Alcatraz Island, part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. This long standing use of Port facilities represents an important and valuable component of the Port's varied maritime portfolio and both retaining the Alcatraz excursion business and enhancing it with other NPS products is

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vital to the Port's maritime mission. It is an important attraction for the City's visitor industry and its proximity to the Port's cruise terminal adds to the attractiveness of San Francisco as a cruise port.

NPS stewardship of Alcatraz includes management of the contractor operating the island's ferry service. The current contracted operator, Alcatraz Cruises, LLC (affiliated with Hornblower Yachts, Inc.) ferries an annual 1,300,000 people to and from Alcatraz with a base of operations at Pier 31½. Prior to the Alcatraz Cruises, LLC contract, Blue & Gold Fleet operated the route from a base at Pier 41.

The NPS contract for ferry service to Alcatraz assigns responsibility for managing and programming the embarkation site to the ferry operator. For that reason the embarkation site has varied with each operator as well as the amenities provided. As mentioned above, NPS places a very high value on the visitor experience at their parks and monuments across the country. NPS has determined that the best way to maximize the interpretive quality of visiting Alcatraz and other NPS points of interest is for it to manage the visitor's experience to the greatest extent possible by developing its own visitor center. NPS' ability to directly control the embarkation site would allow detailed programming from the moment visitors approach the facility, during their roundtrip ferry excursion and again upon disembarkation, providing several opportunities to enhance and supplement the visitor's experience.

NPS KEY SITE NEEDS

- Dedicated utilization of landing facilities including prominent and appropriate NPS branding elements to create a unique area for park visitors preparing for their visit to Alcatraz Island.
- 28,000 – 35,000 square foot facility with a mix of indoor and outdoor spaces.
 - 5,000 – 7,000 square feet of predominantly indoor area for interpretive and exhibit areas.
 - A comfortable, covered area for between 400 and 600 ticketed passengers with expansion potential to 900 passengers.
 - Space for an educational bookstore and Alcatraz-related merchandise outlet.
 - 3,000 – 5,000 square feet of food and beverage space to serve visitors and to prepare food items for vessels.
- Adequate adjacent or nearby area for visitors to arrive via diverse modes of transportation.
- Exclusive assignment of waterways and berthing sites for up to four, 500 passenger vessels.
- A northern waterfront location with good headways to Alcatraz and accessible to visitors.

IDENTIFIED PORT FACILITIES

Based on the above criteria and working with NPS staff and their site selection consultant, Port staff have identified five possible locations that could serve as the long-

term home of the NPS Alcatraz embarkation site. The five locations are shown on Exhibit 1 and described below:

Pier 19½ - Approximately 41,000 square feet of non-historic shed and apron space located between the Pier 19 and 23 historic bulkhead buildings. It is currently vacant.

Pier 29½ - Approximately 71,000 square feet of historic shed and apron space located between the Pier 29 and 31 historic bulkhead buildings. It is currently vacant.

Pier 31 and 31½ - Approximately 77,000 square feet of historic shed and apron space. Pier 31 is currently vacant and 31½ is under lease to Hornblower until October 31, 2014. Hornblower operates Alcatraz ferry service from this location. Currently, site improvements are under environmental review by the San Francisco Planning Department with expected completion on the review process in 2010.

Pier 41 - Approximately 35,000 square feet of non-historic building and apron space located immediately north of Pier 39. It is under lease to Blue & Gold until March 31, 2015.

Pier 45, Shed A - Approximately 90,000 square feet of historic shed and apron space located at the foot of Taylor Street in Fisherman's Wharf. It is currently partially leased on a month to month basis. Tenants include the San Francisco Maritime National Park Association, curators for the WW II submarine, USS Pampanito.

NPS PLANNING PROCESS

NPS has engaged URS Corporation to produce a feasibility analysis of the five Port sites as well as a number of sites controlled by NPS north of Port property including sites at Fort Mason. URS will complete a detailed evaluation of the sites and help identify the sites that best meet NPS goals and objectives for a San Francisco embarkation site. After internal NPS review, NPS will conduct environmental screening analysis on the top alternative sites as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NPS cannot select a site until the completion of NEPA review. Additionally, site development is subject to CEQA and other regulatory review and approval.

The Port, through staff identified below, will work with NPS to study viable and feasible Port locations to house a permanent embarkation site.

- Peter Dailey, Deputy Director, Maritime
- Jonathan Stern, Assistant Deputy Director, Waterfront Development
- Katharine Arrow, Senior Property Manager, Northern Waterfront
- Phil Williamson, Project Manager

Port staff will provide regular updates to and seek input from the Port Commission and Port Advisory groups including the Maritime Commerce Advisory Committee, the Northeast Waterfront Advisory Group and the Fisherman's Wharf Waterfront Advisory Group.

NEXT STEPS

Port staff will continue to work with NPS to analyze the identified Port facilities with a goal of retaining this important trust consistent, waterfront use at the Port of San Francisco. Upon completion of the feasibility analysis Port staff will present its analysis of the sites to be considered by NPS in their NEPA review to the Port Commission. At a later date, NPS will likely request an Exclusive Negotiations Agreement (or similar agreement) from the Port Commission for a specific site or sites.

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