

## **Port of Newport Disappointed by Grays Harbor Historical Seaport Decision**

On 7 June 2018 the Port of Newport received an e-mail confirmation from Grays Harbor Historical Seaport (GHHS) in Aberdeen, Washington rejecting the Port's most recent suggested option for accommodating GHHS's two tall ships during their planned visit to Newport in July 2018. The Port is disappointed by GHHS's decision not to bring their ships to Newport as it appeared that their visit here this April was very successful, as have been numerous other GHHS tall ship visits that the Port has been able to accommodate for more than a decade. In light of the very aggressive stance GHHS has taken in providing information to their ticket holders and members of the media, the Port felt it was necessary to formally clarify a few key points associated with this situation.

When GHHS requested moorage for their two vessels at the Port of Newport, they were required to sign Moorage License Agreements. In Item 1 of the Port of Newport's signed Moorage License Agreements (i.e. Moorage or Storage Space) it clearly states that "the Port reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to temporarily assign or permanently reassign Licensee's boat to other moorage space in the Ports facilities to accommodate repairs, improvements, maintenance or emergencies, or where necessary to permit the orderly administration or maximum efficient public utilization of the Port's facilities. The Port maintains the right to cancel this agreement with 30 days written notice." This is true of all vessels who choose to moor at the Port of Newport. In addition to the Moorage License Agreement, GHHS also signed a Special Use Permit with the Port effective 19 April 2018. Item 4 of this Special Use Permit (i.e. Reservation of Rights) states very clearly that "The Port reserves the right to alter or amend the terms and conditions of this permit at any time." At the Port's Regular Monthly Commission Meeting on 29 May 2018, following considerable public input, the Port Commission made the decision to exercise Item 4 of the Special Use Permit and directed Port staff to "reach out to GHHS about where we have flexibility to reschedule." The Port was well within its right to request GHHS to either reschedule or exercise some degree of flexibility during one of the busiest months of the year, especially in light of the concerns that were recently brought to the Port Commission's attention.

The day after the Port Commission made their recommendation, the Port staff began to investigate and propose options to accommodate GHHS' planned July visit to Newport. Since that time the Port of Newport staff has been committed to coming up with solutions to accommodate the needs of GHHS and still balance the needs of other users of the Port. While the Port staff was beginning to look at options, GHHS decided to engage in a very aggressive e-mail exchange with the Port in which they threatened the Port of Newport with bad press and other additional consequences should the Port not reverse their decision. On 1 June 2018 GHHS sent the Port Commissioners and Port management staff an inflammatory press release and subsequently released this highly misleading document to the public four days later. They then provided the contact information of Port management staff and Port Commissioners to GHHS ticketholders which created a multi-day telephone and e-mail barrage by misinformed customers while the Port staff continued to work in good faith to find viable, safe solutions to the moorage problem.

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An initial option was presented for GHHS' smaller vessel to safely moor at the South Beach Recreational Marina (the larger vessel wouldn't be able to enter our Recreational Marina due to a depth limitation). This would have allowed GHHS to continue the operation of one of their vessels without issue. This option would have allowed GHHS to honor their commitment to ticketholders while we continued to search for options within the Port for the larger vessel. The Port was surprised when GHHS categorically rejected this option even though it provided a safe and effective alternative to moor one of their vessels. Once this option was rejected, the Port staff invested countless hours to come up with an alternate mooring and loading/unloading solution to accommodate both vessels. This involved virtually all of the Port's office staff, including the General Manager, the Director of Operations, the Commercial Harbormaster, and the Recreational Harbormaster. A unique and safe alternative option at our Port Dock 7 was presented to GHHS that would have allowed them to continue their planned two-vessel operation in Newport in July as scheduled but this option was also ultimately rejected on 7 June 2018. The Port continued to be disappointed by GHHS's decision to abandon Newport given that very viable options were made available.



Entrance to Commercial Marina in Yaquina Bay, Newport, Oregon

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Throughout this process, the most unfortunate aspect of all was the aggressive social and public media campaign that GHHS implemented early on in this process. GHHS's intentional attempts to influence public opinion through misleading and inflammatory rhetoric was highly unprofessional and did a disservice to the Port staff, the Commission, the Port stakeholders and the citizens of Newport who were wrongly branded. This was not productive and provided the public with the impression that the Port of Newport did not appreciate or have any consideration for these two tall ships operating in Newport. In fact, the Port invested countless hours to do everything it could to help develop a solution and it is unfortunate that GHHS continued to reject realistic options that would have enabled all of their July ticket holders to still come to Newport as scheduled. It also seemed quite shortsighted for GHHS to sell tickets and promise services to thousands of customers based on a Special Use Permit and Moorage License Agreements that clearly state that the Port can make changes to the terms and conditions based in part on the operational needs of the Port, and then reject the proposed alternative options. At no point did the staff of the Port of Newport stop working on a solution to this situation. Unfortunately, it was GHHS who walked away from Newport and forced their ticket holders to cancel or change their plans. Everyone loses when one side is simply unwilling or unable to work collaboratively toward a solution.

While it is clear that GHHS may have an alternative perspective on this final outcome, the Port of Newport felt that it was important to provide the media, GHHS ticket holders, local Newport business owners, and the Port staff with an explanation of the facts of the situation. The Commissioners for the Port of Newport try to weigh the needs of all users of the Port when they are making decisions and this situation was no different. The needs of the commercial fishing industry, local Port businesses, recreational users, and Port visitors were all taken into consideration as options were developed. In the end, the Port of Newport is disappointed they will not be seeing the tall ships in Newport this summer but we hope they will continue to be successful and will consider the Port of Newport an option for their future plans.