



# PORT TOWNSEND & JEFFERSON COUNTY LEADER

Wednesday, April 23, 2008

## NW Maritime Center awards \$8.1 million bid

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Photo by Blythe Lawrence

The Northwest Maritime Center Board of Directors on Tuesday signed an \$8.1 million contract with Primo Construction of Sequim to construct a two-building, 26,000-square-foot maritime education facility on its 2-acre waterfront site adjacent to Hudson Point. On-site construction work begins in May, said Northwest Maritime Center Executive Director Stan Cummings. The groundbreaking ceremony and community celebration is planned for July 1. The goal is to have the buildings at the end of Water Street ready by the September 2009 Wooden Boat Festival.

"We've pushed off from the dock," Steve Oliver, president of the Northwest Maritime Center Board of Directors, said in a press release. "We received new pledges to the capital campaign over the past few weeks totaling more than \$1 million, bringing the total raised to date to \$9.3 million for this phase of the project. There is an additional \$1 million in

the pipeline and a plan in place to raise the final \$2.5 million."

The board is pleased to be working with Primo Construction, and to have First Federal Savings & Loan providing short-term bridge financing of \$5 million. "We're committed to supporting our local community and businesses whenever possible," noted Oliver.

### Two buildings

The NWMC dream began here in 1998. By 2003 the former bulk oil plant waterfront property had been purchased and a dock was being built to handle tall ship visitors. But initial hopes of the center opening in 2004 or 2005 slipped by, and it wasn't until 2007 when more firm plans appeared. At one time the plan was to build one building and add the second structure later as resources allowed.

The April 22 announcement means both the Chandler Maritime Education Building and the Maritime Heritage and Resource Building can be constructed at the same time, NWMC officials said.

"It will save money and minimize construction disruption at the end of Water Street," said David King, Maritime Center board member and past president, and currently a member of the Port Townsend City Council. "It also fixes the construction cost, which will make it easier for our board and staff to plan for the early completion of the capital campaign and the long-term sustainability of the facility. The dream of this organization has always been to create and sustain a wonderful community space that honors our maritime heritage and anchors it into the future. That dream is now a big step closer to reality."

### Education first

While both buildings are intended to be finished and ready for occupancy by early September 2009, the Chandler Maritime Education Building is planned as the first.

"The Camilla Chandler Foundation stepped up early in our capital campaign with a million dollar naming gift, and we want to honor that gift by opening the education building first," said Peter Geerlofs, who serves on the board program committee. The foundation has direct connections to Port Townsend.

The Chandler Maritime Education Building, at about 11,000 square feet, contains a variety of flexible spaces that can be used by individuals, small groups and larger classes. In the Shipwrights Shop, seasoned shipwrights will work on projects such as Pocock classic cedar singles that require a high level of expertise. The Messing-About Boat Shop will feature sailmaking, leather and rope work, hand-tooled crafts and family boatbuilding, where visitors will be encouraged to pitch in on a community project. The Bosun's Locker is a boat shop supply, tool center and program staging area. On the second floor, three classrooms accessed via a mezzanine walkway provide a meeting space for ongoing programs. Atop the building is the Pilothouse, a representation of a modern ship's bridge containing fully functional navigation, communications and vessel control equipment.

The Chandler Education Building cannot be finished soon enough for Rob Sanderson and Andy Gale, who run the NWMC education programs. "We are so cramped for classroom space this summer," said Sanderson, "that we have to throw our executive director out of his office so the kids have a place to meet." The Port Townsend High School sailing team and the Sea Scout Ship Falcon will also hold their regularly scheduled meetings in the classrooms.

According to Andy Gale, Puget Sound Explorer program manager, the availability of storage space for equipment and a dry space for hosting the seventh-graders from Blue Heron Middle School will take stress out

of scheduling in the spring, when the weather can be problematic.

The Chandler Education Building allows many of the popular boat festival features to take place year-round. "We're working closely with the local marine trades businesses to showcase their work to the public," said Kaci Cronkhite, festival director. "The festival attracts an international audience of 25,000 visitors over a four-day weekend every September and brings more than \$2 million into the community. The Chandler Education Building will allow us to expand those benefits to the community and help support businesses that are the heart, soul and backbone of the local economy."

### **Second building**

The second of the two buildings, the Maritime Heritage and Resource Building, includes the expanded Wooden Boat Chandlery and demonstration space, a coffee shop, plus a Boathouse for rowing shells and kayaks on the main level. On the upper level is the H.W. McCurdy Library plus office and conference space.

"The chandlery is one of the top resources in the nation for all-things-wooden-boat," said Cronkhite, many made locally and regionally. "Being right on Water Street will make it much more visible to visitors as well as to the community."

### **Green ideas**

Project Manager Dave Robison is pleased that the community-driven design process will result in a facility that not only reflects history and a sense of place but also will be a model of green-design and energy efficiency. "We will meet the criteria for LEED Gold certification," he said. Robison also emphasized the strong partnership with the City of Port Townsend. "Completion of the Maritime Center in conjunction with other proposed waterfront improvements will help revitalize the eastern end of the historic downtown and provide many benefits to the citizens of our community," he added.

*(See related story on page A 1 in this issue on the city's proposed bond-funded infrastructure improvement projects.)*

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