

WHATCOM MARITIME ASSOCIATION

"To catalog, record, preserve and restore the past and present elements of our local maritime heritage"

MARITIME EDUCATIONAL CENTER PROPOSAL

Whatcom Maritime Association (WMA) and Home Port Learning Center (HPLC) propose the Waterfront Futures Group plan for the development of a Maritime Educational Center dedicated to the historical, cultural, environmental, recreational and economic significance of the marine environment of Bellingham and Whatcom County. We further propose the WMA and HPLC be jointly and directly involved in the planning and operation of such a facility.

Bellingham has had an exciting and varied history that has always revolved around the maritime trades. The Maritime Educational Center will strengthen this identity, and provide a focal point for sustainable economic and tourism development. We are inviting the Waterfront Futures Group to join with us in our desire to establish a key waterfront parcel for public benefit.

Whatcom Maritime Association is a private, non-profit 501.c.3 tax-exempt corporation formed in 1992 to "catalog, record, preserve, and restore the past and present elements of our local maritime heritage." We have lived up to our mission by sponsoring maritime festivals, raising the steam engine from the tug Charlotte from the depths of Lake Whatcom, re-opening the Semiahmoo Museum, restoring the MV Plover, and provided stewardship for the Fisherman's Memorial at Squalicum Harbor. We opened the first Maritime Museum in Bellingham at 1000 C Street in 1996. We moved that museum in 1998 to the corner of Central and Roeder Avenues. At the present time all of our artifacts are in storage awaiting a new home.

The Home Port Learning Center is a private, non-profit 501.c.3 transitional school for at-risk youth in Whatcom County. Through experiential learning in a marine context the youth acquire academic, vocational and work readiness skills. Since 1995, Home Port has contracted with Whatcom County school districts and the Juvenile Court to provide educational services for students in need. The curriculum, delivered in a "hands-on" manner, includes small boat building and repair, watershed enhancement, environmental stewardship and personal projects selected by the students. The school is located on the corner of C and Astor Streets. The facility has recently been purchased by the City of Bellingham, and is in an area designated for renewal in the immediate future. Home Port's lease expires in 2003.

From our perspective, we are two organizations with an excellent track record and uncertain future, but with the potential to join forces with the Port and the City to achieve great things. The establishment of a Maritime Educational Center would, of course, enhance the programs of the WMA and HPLC, but we feel it would also benefit a number of other groups and organizations, including:

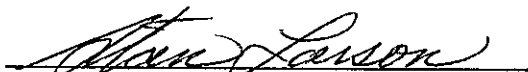
- The Snow Goose educational programs
- The Sea Scouts Explorers programs


- The Northwest Schooner Society
- The Youth Maritime Training Association
- The Corinthian Yacht Club
- The Bellingham Sail and Power Squadron
- The Baykeeper Program
- Nooksack Salmon Enhancement
- The Elderhostel programs
- The Parks and Recreation programs of Bellingham and Whatcom County

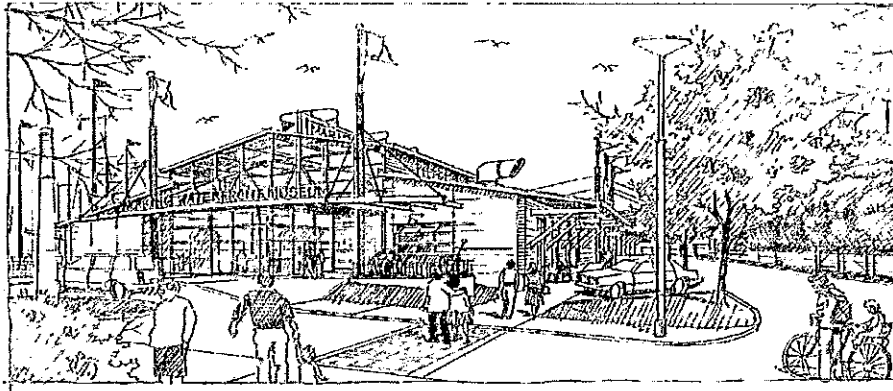
We visualize a fairly large campus, with adjacent water access to accommodate a number of diverse activities, and suitable for various educational and hands-on marine activities including, but not limited to:

- Training in sailing and rowing
- Boat construction and repair
- Topical classes on various maritime skills
- Heritage exhibits and displays
- Modeling
- Wooden boat displays
- Exhibits on the area's historical waterfront industries
- Special gillnet and seiner fishing industries
- Maritime festivals, antique boat shows, and historic vessel visitations

We believe a Maritime Educational Center on our waterfront would be a real asset for Bellingham and Whatcom County. We have a number of contacts, through the Pacific Maritime Heritage Council, that would act as consultants on such a project. We would be happy to work with you to make this a reality. If you have questions or desire more information, please contact Elbie Beamer at 738-3963 or Steve Paus at 676-6780, ext. 50146.


 Stan Larson, President, WMA


 Doug Robertson, President, HPLC



WORKING WATERFRONT MUSEUM

**705 Dock St
Tacoma, WA 98406
253-272-2750**

* www.wwfrontmuseum.org

- Established in 1995 as the Commencement Bay Maritime Center, the **Working Waterfront Museum** is located in the northern 15,000 square feet of the historic, century-old Puget Sound Freight Warehouse building on the Thea Foss Waterway.
- Planned \$3 million enhancement of the **Working Waterfront Museum** includes about \$2.5 million in interpretive, interactive exhibits to create a regionally and nationally recognized, working waterfront-focused maritime museum in Tacoma.
- Working with the **Foss Waterway Development Authority**, the property owner, to plan and complete a \$10.8 million renovation of the full 45,000 square foot Puget Sound Freight Warehouse (PSFW) building and adjacent dock as the Tacoma Maritime Center (TMC).
- Invested, since January 1995, a total of about \$ 200,000 in the maritime museum project, including \$ 35,000 in monthly lease payments and taxes to the **City of Tacoma** for building space, and \$ 165,000 in city-approved interior exhibit and meeting space improvements.
- Hired professional project development consultants to help assess and plan essential elements of **Working Waterfront Museum** -- engineering/ structural (August, 2000), architectural/ design (October-November, 2000), and exhibit/ interpretation (January, 2001), with additional specialized consultant hiring anticipated.
- Opening, during 2002 Tacoma Maritime Fest in September, the **Working Waterfront Museum's** first significant, short term (six month) exhibit in the new Phase I exhibit space, "Tacoma Ships, Shipyards, and Shipbuilders," featuring historical artifacts and materials celebrating Tacoma's proud shipbuilding history.
- Changed, on May 1, 2001, the official name of the maritime center to **Working Waterfront Museum** to more clearly reflect and communicate its mission, and interpret the working waterfront maritime history of Tacoma and Puget Sound.
- Awarded, final **Tacoma City Council** approval of a total 30 year lease, between **FWDA** and **CBMA** on existing space in the PSFW building. Lease approval provides necessary permanence and stability to allow significant fund raising required for **WWM** program, exhibits and other improvements.
- Hired museum professional, Samuel Shogren, as Managing Director in October 2002. Mr. Shogren is an archaeologist with more than 15 years of museum experience, including work as curator at the Penobscot Marine Museum, in Maine and Director of the Aspen Historical Society in Aspen, Colorado.

* see also CBMA@wwfrontmus.org

Commencement Bay Maritime Association

Working Waterfront Museum

Puget Sound Freight Warehouse Building

Project Milestones

- 1994:** Original presentation of "Life on the Sound," a maritime heritage and folklife exhibit, during the first Tacoma Maritime Fest on the Thea Foss Waterway. Adopting the name of the exhibit, **Life on the Sound** was founded as a separate nonprofit (IRS 501 c. 3) organization, to preserve, present and promote Tacoma's working waterfront history.
- 1995:** Major step taken to establish a permanent maritime museum when **Life on the Sound** signs a month-to-month lease with the **City of Tacoma** for 15,000 square feet in the historic Puget Sound Freight Warehouse (PSFW) building on the Thea Foss Waterway.
- 1996:** Name of organization changed to **Commencement Bay Maritime Association**, and its PSFW space to **Commencement Bay Maritime Center**, to more fully reflect its Tacoma/ Pierce County maritime historical roots, and interpretive and educational mission.
- 1997:** **CBMA** receives its own federal, Internal Revenue Service 501.c. 3 tax exempt status as an educational/ cultural organization. Under the leadership of the **Foss Waterway Development Authority**, the original project partnership is formed to renovate and redevelop the PSFW building as the Tacoma Community Maritime Center. Key partners are: **Commencement Bay Maritime Association**, **Tacoma Sea Scouts** (Boy Scouts Pacific Harbors Council), **Bates Technical College** boat building program, and the **Tacoma YMCA** recreational rowing program.
- 1997 - 2000:** **CBMA**, as part of its original lease agreement with **City of Tacoma**, presents public programs in PSFW building, including maritime heritage exhibits, community events including Maritime Fest-related activities, and heritage vessel visits (brig *Lady Washington*, steamer *Virginia V*, tugboat *Arthur Foss*, schooner *Adventuress*) at the adjacent Dock Street Landing dock.
- 2000:** In conjunction with the Tacoma visit of the historical sailing ship *Lady Washington*, presented the first ever shoreside, community exhibit of related late 18th century Pacific Northwest maritime heritage artifacts and materials. More people visited the exhibit during the ship's 12 day visit than during the previous four months.

2000: Executive director, operations and program manager positions established through major grant from the **Ben B. Cheney Foundation** to:

- spearhead maritime museum development project
- enhance organizational capacity, capability and credibility
- expand community awareness, support and programs
- strengthen project partnership

First significant, short term (September, 2000 - March, 2001) exhibit presented at the **CBMC**, "The Mosquito Fleet: Tacoma's Steamboat Story," featuring artifacts and materials from the collection of the private **Museum of Puget Sound**. Exhibit opened in conjunction with the Tacoma Maritime Fest, a growing community maritime heritage event.

Project professional consultants hired to help assess and plan essential elements of project: engineering/ structural (August) and architectural/ design (October), and hiring planned for historical interpretative and exhibit planning, and marketing, public relations and fundraising support.

2001: Renamed the Commencement Bay Maritime Center the **Working Waterfront Museum** to better reflect the **CBMA's** founding mission, and communicate the museum's interpretive, exhibit, and education purpose. (February, 2001)

Total 30 year lease, at \$ 1 per year, granted to **CBMA** by the **Foss Waterway Development Authority** board, capping a nearly six year organizational and project development effort. (April, 2001)

Received two front page, lead feature stories, and major editorial in Tacoma News Tribune headlined, "Waterfront Museum is Great Project for Foss" [Waterway]. (April - June, 2001)

Planned continued project development steps:

- Construct 3600 square foot, Phase I interior improvement project -- climate-controlled exhibit, meeting/ office, shop space.
- Upgrade current exhibits, open second major temporary exhibit -- "Tacoma Ships, Shipyards, and Shipworkers."
- Plan capital fund raising campaign for full \$ 4 million museum project, in conjunction with \$ 11 million PSFW building renovation campaign.

The Commencement Bay
Maritime Association, Maritime Center
and Working Waterfront Museum:
A Brief History

The **Commencement Bay Maritime Association**, the nonprofit parent organization of the **Working Waterfront Museum**, began in the late 1980's. It was then that the **Institute of the North American West** sponsored a touring exhibit developed by Tacoma anthropologist and folklore specialist Phyllis Harrison.

The exhibit, called "Life on the Sound," was developed and displayed at the time of the Washington State Centennial celebration in 1989. It documented the maritime folklife of the Puget Sound area in historical photos, models, and other artifacts. Several artisans and craftspeople, including basket makers, model builders, and marlinspike (fancy ropework) sailors, sometime accompanied the exhibit, giving "living history" demonstrations at selected sites. One of the final exhibit sites was the Seattle Tacoma International Airport, where it was viewed by tens of thousands of people during its year and a half in the main passenger terminal.

Believing that the exhibit deserved a more permanent home, Phyllis teamed with former commercial fisherman and master boatbuilder Michael Vlahovich to present it in a Foss Waterway building then used as his boatshop. With the exhibit as its centerpiece, the two Tacomans, one who operated a small boatbuilding and repair business on the working waterfront and the other who explained and exhibited its historical roots, presented a community open house in 1994. This public event featured both the "Life on the Sound" exhibit, supplemented with Tacoma-focused maritime historical items, as well as smaller vintage wooden boats owned by Mike and destined for future restoration and display. This initial open house later expanded, becoming the annual community special event now known as the Tacoma Maritime Fest.

Taking the name of the exhibit, **Life on the Sound** was incorporated as a nonprofit organization in September, 1994. The following January, in 1995, the volunteer group took a major step forward when it leased 15,000 square feet of space from the City of Tacoma in the historic Puget Sound Freight Warehouse building. The building and its deep water dock are located on the northwestern part of what is now the Thea Foss Waterway.

The wooden structure, built in 1900, was one of three remaining sections of the original, so-called "mile-long" warehouse complex which lined Tacoma's western waterfront in the early part of the 20th century. These warehouses, with their 100-foot long clearspan wooden beams and trusses, were built to handle thousands of tons of cargo -- grain, lumber, and many other products --

destined the square-rigged sailing ships and later steam and diesel-powered vessels moored alongside at the deep water dock site. The warehouses were themselves masterpieces of wooden architecture and engineering, built by proud local carpenters and other craftsmen.

In 1996, Phyllis and Mike moved on to other business activities in Tacoma. Following evaluation and redefinition of its future role, the nonprofit organization they had founded and developed became the **Commencement Bay Maritime Association**. It received its federal government status as a tax exempt educational and cultural organization in March, 1997. At the same time, the name of the exhibit, boat restoration, meeting and library space located in the Puget Sound Freight building became the **Commencement Bay Maritime Center**.

During the next three years, the **CBMC** continued its slow but steady growth. In 1999, the **CBMA** hired a part-time administrator, and a year later increased this role and also added a part-time executive director, both with funding from the **Ben B. Cheney Foundation**. Additional support came from Tacoma native and maritime industry leader Drew Foss, who pledged significant funding and donation of his considerable collection of maritime artifacts. Drew, son of Henry Foss and grandson of Thea and Andrew Foss, founders in 1889 of the worldwide marine business now known as the **Foss Maritime Company**, was named **CBMA** honorary board chair in 2000.

Today, as the organization enters a new century 100 years after its historic warehouse building was constructed, the **CBMA** continues its growth and transition and faces its greatest challenge. The six-year-old maritime heritage group plans to develop a \$ 4 million maritime museum in its current space, part of a planned \$ 10.8 million restoration of the Puget Sound Freight Warehouse by the building's owner and property manager, the **Foss Waterway Development Authority**. As part of its project development program, in February, 2001 the **CBMA** board changed the name of the maritime center to the **Working Waterfront Museum**, to more closely reflect its Tacoma historical roots and mission.

The **Commencement Bay Maritime Association** continues its planned, organic growth. It is re-evaluating and reorganizing itself to help realize its original, more than decade-long dream -- to successfully develop and operate a first class, widely-known maritime museum and active educational program on Tacoma's working waterfront.

-- CRF 4/ 2001

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