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As Contract for Services Nears End, Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission and Flagship Niagara League Committed to Continued Collaboration

PHMC highlights plan to support Erie Maritime Museum Complex and U.S. Brig Niagara for years to come.

Erie, PA - As the current Contract for Services between the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission (PHMC) and the Flagship Niagara League (FNL) nears its conclusion on December 31, 2023, both organizations are pleased to reaffirm their commitment to continued collaboration for the advancement of Erie and the region's maritime history.

PHMC appreciates the significance of Erie and its maritime history in the Pennsylvania story and is enthusiastic about positioning the Erie Maritime Museum as a premier maritime history center. To realize this vision, PHMC is making a substantial investment in the Erie Maritime Museum Complex, including the U.S. Brig *Niagara*. Both the museum and the ship will receive significant upgrades, with the development of new exhibits at the museum and repairs and improvements to the ship over the next few years. The elevation of the museum as a top-tier maritime history destination will draw a wider audience, educating more people about this important history and serving as a driver for Erie's tourism economy.

This vision for the museum features the *Niagara* as a centerpiece of its programming and educational curriculum. The agency's goal is for the Erie Maritime Museum and the U.S. Brig *Niagara* to deliver dynamic educational experiences that highlight Pennsylvania's maritime history to those who visit this destination. 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. While *Niagara* will spend most of her time day-sailing from her home port, Erie, PHMC plans to sail to other Great Lakes destinations several times a year and to continue to participate in Tall Ships.

PHMC will resume direct management of the U.S. Brig *Niagara*, hiring the ship's professional crew, a staffing model successfully employed from 1992 to 2009. This

model will include hiring a full-time captain, chief mate, shipwright, as well as seasonal crew members.

As part of its increased investment, PHMC will allocate an additional \$400,000 annually to support U.S. Brig *Niagara* operations, in addition to the existing \$350,000 earmarked for maintenance and operations. This combined annual base allocation of \$750,000 underscores PHMC's dedication to sustaining the program's success.

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. The significant investment of resources over the next two years will culminate in the ship sailing Pennsylvania's northwest coast in 2026 when the United States and the Commonwealth celebrate the nation's 250th anniversary.

PHMC and FNL share both a long history of partnership and a passion for the *Niagara*. Both organizations firmly believe that the best way to preserve a great ship is to sail it, making it a destination and an asset to the community.

"The sailing of the *Niagara* is only one aspect of the partnership between PHMC and the Flagship Niagara League. Although PHMC will resume direct management and operation of the *Niagara*, we wish to continue collaborating with the Flagship Niagara League in the realization of our vision for the Erie Maritime Museum Complex. We appreciate the value the League has brought to the Museum and the *Niagara* and are excited about future possibilities to achieve even more together," said PHMC Executive Director Andrea Lowery.

The Flagship Niagara League is currently completing a strategic planning process and exploring a diverse array of possibilities for the organization's programmatic future.

"We are actively engaged in ongoing discussions with PHMC on how our organizations can continue working together within PHMC's new operational framework for the Erie Maritime Museum and the *Niagara*," said Michael Martin, FNL Board Chair.

PHMC and FNL want a very bright future for the Erie Maritime Museum and the U.S. Brig *Niagara*, and we have a genuine desire to continue our relationship not only for the benefit of our two organizations but also for the citizens of Erie and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Visitors to Erie can be assured that, for years to come, they will have the opportunity to experience the U.S. Brig *Niagara*.

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