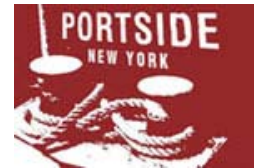


PortSide New York
Historic Ships in NYC ~ their needs & the challenges they face
Preliminary summary as of 4/23/12



Ships face impediments of two sorts: physical issues with the piers, and management policies that impede use of the piers. Often the latter compounds the former and prevents work-around solutions. This means that issues which should be small often prove hard to resolve and can lead to an utter impasse, a very delayed permit and/or a compromised ship program.

For ships in NYC, the docking aggravation factor is high. This has earned NYC a reputation from the mid-Atlantic to Maine as a city whose piers are hard to impossible to use. The consequences of this are the following: historic vessels have left NYC, transient vessels pass NYC by rather than make stops here, visiting maritime festivals such as Op Sail occur in a stunted version here, and locally-based vessels have their own programs (and budgets) stunted as excessive energy is spent tackling obstacles.

Common Design-Construction impediments

1. Pier is designated as being “for views” not boats (Valentino Park, Red Hook; No. 5th Street, Williamsburg). Ships propose surveying the communities to see if they want water views with or without boats.
2. Pier is not designed for boats at all; it lacks cleats, bollards, fendering.
3. Pier design that is not thought out to maximize use by the greatest number of boats (eg, piers that are too high-freeboard for low-freeboard boats, or are designed for only front-loading ferries)
4. Pier fences that get in the way of dock lines reaching cleats/bollards.
5. Fences that impede gangways. There is a movement towards installing gates to allow for gangways; however, gate placement may not correspond to where the gangway is on the vessel or may not correspond to the width of the gangway(s). Instead of gates, a better solution would be sectional fences and management that allows sections of the fence to be removed for docking (and then have the sections reinstalled).
6. A pier has had its cleats and bollards removed. (National Lighthouse Museum site)

Pier lacks basic support amenities:

1. Electricity, water connection, sewage pumpout for ships. Many piers have no shoreside toilets for the visitors/audience.
2. Electricity is likely the most significant amenity for many visiting vessels and is likely the easiest fix (as piers are illuminated and tapping into a power line is easy).
3. Piers are not designed (or managed) to allow vehicles to make deliveries to ships. Ships often need heavy items (generators, maintenance equipment and supplies) and it would help to have a car/truck/ van deliver these; however, many parks have an anti-vehicle policy.
4. NYC’s new park piers do not include space for building space for off-ship storage of gear plus workshop space. Homeported vessels would benefit from such spaces.

NYC's concept of historic ships seems based on short term visits; however, all ships need a home somewhere.

Management-Policies

As mentioned, ships often face a situation where rigid policies do not allow for work-arounds to the bad pier designs mentioned above, or rigid management creates another class of impediments in addition to infrastructure problems. Here are two examples:

Bad design is compounded by rigid management regarding fenders on Pier 25, HRPT. Fenders there are oversize, 5' wide Yokohamas; but HRPT refuses to allow vessels to replace these with more appropriately scaled equipment. The size of these fenders, coupled with the odd rule that gangways not rest on the pier, forces ships to make custom, expensive designs that are not industry standards. Several ships have chosen not to come to the pier due to these impediments. Other ships have had to raise tens of thousands of dollars to design and fabricate custom gangway platforms cantilevered from the pier.

West 125th Street Pier, Harlem. During the EDC dockmaster RFP site visit, one attendee asked if portasans could be stationed on the pier or in the park to support a historic vessel that would be based in the park. The answer was "no... not a in new park like this... the community would never support plastic portasans in a park like this." From the ship operator point of view, it would not be advisable to run summer youth programs on a ship without nearby toilets. The road adjoining the park is the extension of a highway off-ramp with speeding cars; camp youth cannot be dispatched into the neighborhood "to find a toilet" as was proposed. Being flexible about portasans would allow many more programs. With an absolute ban on portasans, the pier use is likely limited to special events and short term boat visits, eg, much more occasional use than is the goal of the RFP.

1. Gangways not allowed on the pier (Pier 25, HRPT).
2. Ships prevented from putting out two gangways (Pier 25, HRPT). This violates Coast Guard rules for Attraction Vessels.
3. Rules that say fences that cannot be removed (In the case of HRPT, the fence warrantee is void if anyone other than manufacturer removes the fence, but a site visit by them incurs a \$4,500 per gate move. This makes gates too expensive to move for most cultural programs.)
4. Rules against crews or shipkeepers residing on board in cases of both homeported and visiting vessels. Vessels need to be manned for weather watch, and to prevent vandalism and illegal boarding. Unmanned vessels in HRPT have been tagged with graffiti, had gear thrown overboard, and their dock lines let loose. Accommodating the crew aboard is often part of the crew compensation package and/or boat economics, therefore banning the crew from staying over, can make vessel operations unaffordable.
5. Another kind of crews/shipkeeper impediment exists in Governors Island where management says that crew cannot get off the pier after 6pm. This makes for an oppressive lockdown.

6. Unreasonable financial expectations: demanding that non-profit ships provide free programs while 1) asking them to pay rent, 2) asking them to retrofit piers for use, 3) asking for a share of revenue from their revenue producing events (or prohibiting them all together), 4) giving them too short-term leases or some combination of the four items above.
7. Insurance issues: The levels requested are often too high (eg, do not reflect market rates for what historic ships carry) or do not reflect the nature of the boat.
8. Management at the NYC piers available to historic ships rarely includes a senior decision-maker person who is knowledgeable regarding boats, so negotiating insurance takes too long.
9. The permit process as a whole generally takes too long. The permits themselves are often too long and too complex. Often the permit process can take months for a visit of just a few days.

Low affirmation of historic ships

The city has been very slow to recognize the cultural, educational, and economic value of historic ships. As the city reawakened to its waterways, one thing generally overlooked was the actual vessels that use them.

Historic ships serve multiple functions and are a beloved attraction in cities around the world. Integrated into the image of a great harbor city, these boats can draw tourism and beneficial cross-promotion with the city...

A ship teaches more, and with more excitement, than a simple view of a waterway (with or without interpretive panel) and fosters a true connection to history, economics, engineering, ecology, and understanding of the living harbor around it.

Little consideration is given to how a historic ship can continue to exist—the need for a home port, maintenance, and funding requirements. Some ships have the capacity to generate their own revenue if allowed to do so, but all ships need the same access to funding opportunities from the city as comparable land-based organizations in order to provide free public programming. Ships should be more enthusiastically funded and promoted.

With Vision 2020's focus on the water itself, the above issues need to be addressed for the plan to come to life.