

**Historic Preservation Consultation Meeting  
Nuclear Ship *SAVANNAH* National Historic Landmark  
September 17, 2024, 2:30-4pm EDT  
(Hybrid on-board NS *Savannah* and MS Teams)**

**Participants:**

- Erhard W. Koehler, Manager, N.S. *Savannah* Programs, MARAD
- John Kelly, Retired DOE, past president of ANS
- Gail Marcus, past president, ANS
- Jed Porter, Architect, NPS Region 1, North Atlantic - Appalachian
- Bob Adams, President, NS Savannah Association
- Anne Jennings, Cultural Resource Specialist, Tidewater, Inc.
- Ed Tupin, Health Physics Society
- Dan O'Rourke, ANL
- Konnie Westcott, ANL
- Michael Moan
- Paul Johnston, Curator of Maritime History, SI
- Anna Holloway, Supervisory Historian, MARAD
- Tanya Hood, Project Manager, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, NRC
- Betsy Merritt, Deputy General Counsel, National Trust
- Barbara Voulgaris, SDC
- Diana Diaz Toro, Project Manager, Environmental Review Materials Branch, NRC
- James Stemm, Curator, National Museum of Nuclear Science & History
- Matthew Schulte, Executive Director, SSHSA
- Fred Blonder, NSSA
- Jim Williams, NSSA

See Acronym List at the end of the document

**Agenda:**

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Minutes Review (May 21, 2024)
- III. Program Update
- IV. Architectural Salvage Working Discussion
- V. Other Business / Adjourn
- VI. Next Meeting: November 19, 2024

## **Welcome and Introductions**

Erhard opened the meeting, he is on the ship with Anna, Anne, and Bob. He introduced Jim and Fred who are working to reanimate the control console, and present on the ship. Otherwise, there were no new members with us today, so we dispensed with introductions.

## **Minutes Review**

The May 21<sup>st</sup> minutes were shared via e-mail prior to the meeting and no comments received either via e-mail or during the meeting.

## **Program Update**

Erhard provided updates on the decommissioning and disposition efforts for the ship. Regarding decommissioning, Erhard noted that during the recent MARAD HQ ESC meeting he may have prematurely declared that Phase II (dismantlement) was complete; a short length of steel ventilation piping was discovered and needs to be removed as part of that phase. The last four waste intermodals are scheduled to be removed at the end of October which will conclude dismantlement. They are working on a change order which will add inclined ladders and modify platforms in the CV for workers to maneuver through the space; this will create a future tour path for visitors through the CV. Erhard also mentioned that project funds are diminishing. Although there remain adequate funds for the project, certain aspects, such as installing the reactor mockup (currently in Cargo Hold 1) in the CV, may not be possible. However, a flat cutaway of the reactor may be installed in the space, and the reactor mockup will remain in the cargo hold and could be installed in the future.

In terms of disposition, Erhard said that our focus has been on outreach to port cities which have expressed interest in conveyance of the ship, generally in response to our federal register notice. We continue to support Michael and Matt regarding interest in the Providence area, and have contacted the Community College of Rhode Island to offer a briefing. Anne is coordinating a briefing and discussion for principals involved in the redevelopment proposals for North Camden, NJ, some of which appear to offer space for a "large ship." Erhard and Anne had a site visit in Bayonne, NJ with Hudson County Cultural and Heritage Affairs last month, and they (Hudson County) are pursuing an economic analysis to see if it may be feasible to locate the ship in Bayonne. Hudson County would like to add an attraction to the area as it is being developed with condos and restaurants, in addition to the existing cruise ship terminal and 9/11 Memorial. Erhard also mentioned the strong interest developing in Savannah, GA – where he made an in-person presentation to the Downtown Rotary Club and Ships of the Sea Museum in July, which led to a follow-up presentation to the Propeller Club in September (last week). During that trip he also presented at the city's Hungry for History lecture series, and met with various governing bodies and individuals who will be stakeholders in any preservation effort. These included the Georgia Ports Authority, the Board of Directors of the Savannah Trade and Convention Center, and developer (and preservation enthusiast) John Cay. Between these trips, Erhard and Anne briefed the Savannah City Manager, who was very interested in the prospect. A consensus among the organizations and individuals has developed to place the ship in the berth to the west of the Convention Center on Hutchinson Island, which was noted to offer protection from weather events, and enjoys easy access and high visibility (we displayed photos of the site during the discussion). We will be following up with a formal briefing to the local offices of the Coast Guard (as the ship would fall under their requirements for moored attraction vessels), Army Corps of Engineers, and the Pilots Association.

John Kelly asked if the Back River to the north may be an option, and Erhard responded that it is not deep enough. Erhard also brought up that Fort Pulaski was mentioned as an option at one point, but it is not an optimal option as it would be a more unprotected location for the ship. Jim asked if there is any interest in Baltimore. Erhard said that there is some and we are working on it. Erhard also noted that there is a strong commitment from MARAD, reinforced at the ESC, that they will work to preserve the ship. This may result in the ship staying in Baltimore longer or joining the reserve fleet in Virginia, vice Texas, but the point is that MARAD may not need to immediately dispose of the ship once the NRC license is terminated, and we may be able to continue outreach until we reach a preservation outcome. Erhard noted we are working with Christofer Nelson at the ASTC, who is following up with locations including Florida.

On the question of inland locations, such as the Great Lakes, Erhard mentioned there may be navigation obstacles, such as the Welland Canal, which may make such locations impractical, which the group then discussed. John noted that he has seen a Viking Cruise ship transit the canal, which led to the discussion of the size of the ship and canal. Matthew provided information on the maximum size of vessels transiting the canal (740'x78') and the size of Viking ships (665'x77'). Erhard noted that Savannah is 78' wide, but has fittings welded to one side that increase that dimension. Other outreach initiatives included a meeting with Cathy Green, the new Executive Director of the National Maritime Historical Society, who has been invited to participate in future PRG meetings (she had an overseas conflict for this meeting) and seeking outlets for publishing articles. We are tentatively scheduled to publish in a 2025 issue of *Sea History* (quarterly journal of the NMHS), and are scheduling a meeting to discuss a feature article in the commercial monthly magazine *Sea Classics*. We are also discussing an article in *Preservation* magazine with the editor and staff at the National Trust. We've had the first of two articles published in the ANS monthly magazine *Nuclear News*, with the second scheduled for November. Recent press coverage included the long-delayed feature article in the *Baltimore Sun*, and a one-page essay in this month's *Baltimore* magazine (with an online photo gallery). We submitted a proposal last week to present at the Preserving the Recent Past conference in Boston in March 2025.

The main focus of the meeting was to discuss architectural salvage. Erhard noted that salvage would be the same for reefing or scrapping. Erhard noted that although both outcomes would envision the same architectural salvage effort, there are no current plans, and importantly no appropriations, to support artificial reefing. Anna discussed the overarching vision we have regarding salvage, sharing the following statement:

*Because NS Savannah has been designated as a NHL, MARAD must take steps to retain signature items from the ship as a mitigative measure for future display and study. The significance assigned to architectural features, material culture, and other ship components will be based on the professional judgment of MARAD historians, curators, senior technical advisors, and qualified consultants. This work will be informed by contextual study and on-site observations. Features identified will be photographed and assigned tracking numbers which will enable salvage teams to identify and properly remove the items.*

*Because of the NHL designation, work that might otherwise be undertaken by NDRF field staff on ships slated for disposal must instead be overseen and substantially performed by individuals whose credentials and experience either meet or exceed the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for Architectural History, Historic Architecture, and/or History. Where applicable, conservators working on the project must adhere to the standards and ethics as outlined by the American Institute for Conservation. Because of the delicate nature*

*of this work, it cannot be done at the Reserve Fleets or at a shipbreaker's yard. It must be performed in a controlled and supervised environment, such as the current layberth, prior to the ship's departure for scrapping or reefing.*

Anna noted that she and Barbara have been working on architectural salvage, by going through the ship and identifying what MARAD may want to accession, and what may be available for other museum ships or organizations. We may look to save rooms wholesale where possible, or just signature items, but we also need to identify where they may go. Barbara is developing a list of original equipment manufacturers, several of which have museums or other heritage archives, and they may be interested in receiving items from the ship in the event it is not preserved. Anna also followed up on Barbara's list to note that this information will also be helpful if the ship is a museum – as it can be used for development and outreach for donors and sponsors. Erhard indicated that we will also be looking for suggestions and comments from the PRG as to what elements to save and where they can go. PRG members can email or call us anytime with input, and we will also be providing draft documents for review and comment.

Paul asked a question about the plight of the *United States* and how that impacts *Savannah* preservation efforts. Erhard responded that we have been careful to not compete with the Big U, and that we do not want *Savannah* to succeed at the expense of any ship (this also includes *John W. Brown*). Paul noted that we should make that view public, and Erhard stated that hopefully the *United States* issue is settled soon, and we may be able to include something about it in our future article for *Sea History*. Michael noted that he thought this was a good strategy. Erhard also asked Paul about setting up a meeting with Susan Gibbs of the SS United States Conservancy; they will discuss this offline.

Betsy asked to get the slides from the meeting, and Anne will send these. Ed asked to show the HPS poster. Anne showed a photo, but tech difficulties didn't allow her to share the pdf. Tanya noted it was shared in the PRG Update Anne emailed on July 26.

Erhard mentioned that the next meeting is 11/19 and he is again inviting everyone to come to the meeting in-person; he will look into scheduling the Thanksgiving potluck for that day to encourage attendance (we may get to eat off the ship's China service!)

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3.50.

#### **Action Items:**

- Anne to send meeting minutes
- Anne to send slides from meeting to PRG
- Erhard and Paul discuss potential meeting with Susan Gibb.

#### **Acronyms:**

A CHP	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
ADAMS	Agencywide Documents Access and Management System
ANL	Argonne National Lab (DOE)
ANS	American Nuclear Society
ASTC	Association of Science and Technology Centers
CAMM	Council of American Maritime Museums

CV	Containment Vessel
DOE	(US) Department of Energy
DOI	(US) Department of Interior
DOT	(US) Department of Transportation
ESC	Executive Steering Committee
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FPO	Federal Preservation Officer
FRN	Federal Register Notice
HNSA	Historic Naval Ships Association
HPS	Health Physics Society
LTP	License Termination Plan
MARAD	Maritime Administration (DOT)
MHT	Maryland Historical Trust
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
NARA	National Archives and Record Administration
NMHS	National Maritime Historical Society
NMSS	Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards (NRC)
NPS	National Park Service (DOI)
NRC	(US) Nuclear Regulatory Commission
PA	Programmatic Agreement
PCB	polychlorinated biphenyls
PRG	Peer Review Group
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Officer
SI	Smithsonian Institution
SIA	Society for Industrial Archaeology
SOI	Secretary of the Interior
SSHSA	Steamship Historical Society of America
TSCA	Toxic Substances Control Act