



THE NAVY YARD NEWS

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE FRIENDS OF THE CHARLESTOWN NAVY YARD

Fall 2011

Navy Yard Welcomes 72nd Commander on Board

For Commander Matt Bonner the weeks leading to July 22, 2011, presented three important milestones: his 40th birthday, his 14th wedding anniversary, and his first command of a United States Navy Ship. Not just any ship, but the oldest commissioned war ship afloat in the world, *USS Constitution*.

Seventy crew members welcomed the commanding officer for the start of a two-year stint which will include the 200th anniversary commemoration of the War of 1812. Cmdr. Bonner replaces Cmdr. Tim Cooper, who began his service in 2009.

"I'm honored, but it's humbling," Cmdr. Bonner said. He describes his command as a "dream job" which has him leading an "awesome" crew. "They are smart, polite, motivated self-starters. Half of them come directly from boot camp, all hand picked," he said. "A crew makes the difference in a ship."

This ship captain and his crew are responsible for maintaining a 200 year-old National Historic Landmark. She is kept constantly afloat and hosts more



MC3 Kathryn Macdonald receives an award from her new commander during Navy Week in July.

than half a million visitors a year on her decks. "Old Ironsides" undergoes constant restoration while berthed, but is scheduled for a major overhaul in dry dock in 2015.

What may become the highlight of



Cmdr. Matthew Bonner salutes during a ceremony commemorating the ship's historic victory in War of 1812.

Cmdr. Bonner's tenure is next year's bicentennial of the War of 1812. "Old Ironsides" received her famous nickname in battles with Britain in that war, and today remains a tangible reminder of the ascendancy of American sea power over its colonizer.

Operation Sail (OpSail), a 50-year old nonprofit organization started during the administration of President John F. Kennedy, has been charged by Congress with carrying out next year's national celebration. Tall ships from dozens of countries have been invited to participate, and six cities are designated as ports of call. Six to ten naval vessels and at least a dozen tall ships will visit Boston June 30 to July 6, 2012. It is Cmdr. Bonner's hope that *Constitution* will be flying her own six sails next year, as was first done in modern times in 1997.

The youthful looking Cmdr. Bonner, who was born and raised in Seaford N.Y., and Meredith N.H., has a deep

Navy background. He proudly notes that his father sailed on a ship built in Charlestown Navy Yard, and that he entered the Navy 18 years ago from ROTC training at The Citadel. He has served on five ships, and has had four shore tours, including a stint at the Pentagon as a military education policy planner. In previous assignments he has been a navigator and held second command on a destroyer.

When describing his crew, Cmdr. Bonner emphasizes that his crew "are sailors who have taken on additional responsibilities to learn the ship's history and communicate that to the public." In addition, he notes, they do extensive community service, both in nearby neighborhoods and across the United States.

For the second consecutive year, the crew has been given the Project Good Neighbor Flagship award for small shore commands from the Mid Atlantic command. *Constitution* sailors participated in 58 volunteer projects, lending 6,103 hours of community service to win the award.

"This award recognizes the volunteer spirit and community involvement of the *Constitution* crew," said Cmdr. Bonner. "Their hard work and desire to give back to the community is tremendous, and I am so proud that their tireless efforts have been rewarded."

To keep up with activities and see photos of *Constitution* and her crew, check in with the Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/ussconstitutionofficial>. The link to OpSail is www.opsail.org.

Inside this Issue

Briefly Noted	Page 2
Development Update	Page 3
Navy Yard Real Estate	Page 4

Source: Facebook USS Constitution

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BRIEFLY NOTED

The Friends of Charlestown Navy Yard held five outdoor events this summer: **Summer Solstice** on June 21 with Charlestown Mothers Association, the **Singing Trooper** on July 14, the annual **Barbeque** with Courageous Sailing on Pier 4 on July 27, and in Shipyard Park,



the **Harvard Alumni Jazz Band** on August 11 and the **Complete Works of Shakespeare (abridged)**, with the Charlestown Working Theater on September 10. Each event drew an average of 100 people or more and all were co-sponsored by the Boston Redevelopment Authority and Charlestown Against Drugs.

"The Best of Boston 2011: Neighborhood Eats, Charlestown" is a new distinction for the **Navy Yard Bistro**. Announced in August, the designation lends a new distinction to the small, busy restaurant tucked behind Store 24. And, owner John Moore recently told the FCNY board that his proposal for an Italian restaurant in the ground floor of **Harborview** is still under review by the building owners, who recently invited him for a site visit. He has been given no timetable for a decision on his second restaurant in the Yard.

In an event held in the Navy Yard on Oct 20, 2011, the **Smithsonian Museum** announced it has chosen the **USS Constitution Museum** to be an affiliate of the national museum. Being an affiliate means expanded access to educational and historic resources through collaborative programs, visiting experts, guest speakers, and outreach opportunities. Anne Grimes Rand, President of the USS Constitution Museum, said, "It is an honor to be the first Museum in Boston to be named a Smithsonian Affiliate."

"VOTE Charlestown," a new effort to get voters to the polls, reported success in its first effort: almost 20 percent of registered voters cast ballots in this off-year election for City Councilors. FCNY had also put out its annual call to vote, noting that "the more votes from a neighborhood, the more attention

that neighborhood gets from its elected officials." Precinct 2, which includes the Navy Yard, had 13 percent turnout, or 321 voters out of 2,510 registered. This was the lowest of the seven Charlestown precincts in voting percentage. District Councilor Sal La Mattina, who represents Charlestown, was unopposed. The four incumbent citywide councilors were reelected (in order of votes received citywide): Ayanna S. Pressley, Felix G. Arroyo, John R. Connolly, and Stephen J. Murphy.

Store 24 on First Avenue now has **short-term parking** for those quick stops that residents have been asking

for. Representing the Friends of the Charlestown Navy Yard (FCNY) and the Charlestown Neighborhood Council (CNC), Dave Whelan worked with the Boston Transportation Department to reconfigure loading zone and handicapped spaces to create a space for 15-minute parking. Other changes are a resident parking zone on Third Avenue, and the removal of a meter at First Avenue and Ninth Street for better visibility.



Go Fish, the Navy Yard's lunch truck which started in July will continue to arrive on weekends (Friday through Sunday, from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.) until March, according to proprietor



David Stein. He said, "I appreciate the Navy Yard welcome we received," and said the clientele includes residents, employees, and tourists. He also noted that competition with other food services appeared to have been a nonissue. Stein plans to have a phone app for advance ordering to avoid waiting at the truck in the cold weather.

Send news to info@friendscny.org.

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For membership information, please visit the website or send an e-mail.

The organization is a 501(c)3 non-profit.

DEVELOPMENT IN THE NAVY YARD

The mission of the Friends of the Charlestown Navy Yard (FCNY) includes promoting responsible development while improving the quality of life for residents and visitors. FCNY actively follows all projects proposed within the Yard and strives to keep residents informed of new developments.

The Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) at one time owned approximately two-thirds of the Navy Yard, having acquired it from the federal government when U.S. Navy ceased operation of the shipyard in the late 1970s, and today still owns a large portion of the Yard. The Yard was split between the BRA, extending from Fifth Street to Yard's End, and the National Park Service which owns the portion from Fifth Street west. At the time of transfer, the BRA developed guidelines for development of parcels slated to be improved over time. Although some of these guidelines have been altered to facilitate development over the years, the guidelines set the tone for proposed land use within the Yard.

Chain Forge Building

Little has changed in the status of development of the Chain Forge (Building 105) on the First Avenue block



between Ninth Street and 13th Street. The BRA granted tentative developer designation to the Kavanaugh Advisory Group LLC (KAG) of Danvers in fall 2010. After expiration of that designation in the summer, the BRA board approved a one-year extension to July 2012. One big issue with the Chain Forge is the presence of large machinery that has historic significance, for which any alterations will need governmental approval.

Parcel 39A

A Request for Proposal (RFP) issued in September seeks new proposals for development of the quarter-acre parcel at the corner of First Avenue and Ninth Street. After the last temporarily designated developer was unable to proceed, the BRA has now opened up the potential uses. The RFP calls the parcel "... a prime candidate for a development that promotes housing opportunities, economic activity, cultural and tourist amenities, or institutional uses."

Bids are due on December 2, 2011, and according to Lewis, it is the hope of the BRA that construction can begin in 2012.

Pier 5

Discussions about Pier 5 development have gone silent again. In its latest attempt to designate a developer, the BRA received just one proposal in the summer, but rejected it. "We exercised our right to return proposals," said Geoffrey Lewis, senior project manager, "apparently the market suggests it's not the best time." There are no current plans to find a developer, he said.

Rope Walk Building

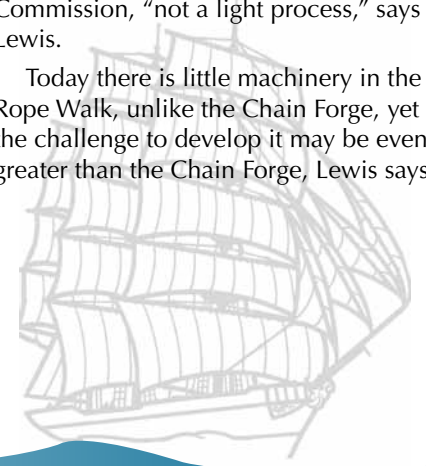
"One of the most significant buildings in the Navy Yard," is the characterization Lewis gives this blocks-long granite building just inside the fence of the Yard. "But, it's a tough, tough building to develop. We would always entertain ideas, but don't have any requests for development out at this time."

The one-story building (numbered 58 by the Navy) extends approximately one-quarter of a mile, but is only 40 feet wide. Designed by Alexander Parris, whose work includes Quincy Market and the Charlestown Navy Yard itself, the Rope Walk produced most of the cordage for the Navy from 1838 until 1970.



Lewis noted one of the biggest challenges is stringent historic guidelines that must be followed to preserve the building. Life safety issues may be more easily solved than historic preservation requirements, he says. "For example, you could perhaps add another egress, but could not add another story to the building," he says. Any changes to the historic fabric would need the approval of the National Park Service and the Massachusetts Historical Commission, "not a light process," says Lewis.

Today there is little machinery in the Rope Walk, unlike the Chain Forge, yet the challenge to develop it may be even greater than the Chain Forge, Lewis says.



Handy links to stay in touch with neighborhood activities:

North End Waterfront weekly <http://www.northendwaterfront.com>

BRA weekly email <http://bostonredevelopmentauthoritynews.org>

Mayor's hot line <http://www.cityofboston.gov/mayor/24/>

Charlestown Patch, daily newsletter <http://charlestown.patch.com>

Friends of Charlestown Navy Yard <http://www.friendscny.org/>

Property Values Remain High in the Navy Yard

What is the current state of residential real estate in Charlestown Navy Yard? Three busy brokers, who also live in the Navy Yard, were asked for their views on the market and all agreed that the neighborhood continues to be popular for both buyers and renters, and that values are holding up.



“Charlestown has not seen the downturn that many other neighborhoods have seen,” says Karen Colombosian of Otis & Ahearn on Atlantic Avenue, who is a 29-year resident of the Navy Yard. “There’s parking, outdoor space, and, unlike a lot of other places, it’s pet-friendly. “This year has been more active than last year, she says.



Karen Dempsey Carney, of Alliance Relocation/Alliance Home Loan, who works with relocating executives and their families, agrees and also points to the “red hot” rental market. For example, a one-bedroom for \$1,700 in one building was rented in 24 hours, and a studio for \$1,850 in another had four applicants for the owner to choose from. It’s been sustained through the summer and into the fall, says Dempsey Carney.

Because of the uncertain economy, some people have chosen to rent rather than to buy. Sherry Grancey, a broker with Gibson Sothebys International Realty, who has lived at Flagship Wharf for

*Navy Yard is an urban oasis
close to downtown
where ships dock
in its “front yard.”*

20 years, says “Rentals have been driven by people hesitant to buy; they’re taking a wait and see position.” Rents here are lower than in Boston proper. There’s a trend of “empty-nesters” downsizing to the city from the suburbs, and some choose a rental try-out before buying.



The main market-rental buildings are Harborview on First Avenue and 16th Street (with 224 units nearly full), and Building 33 on Second Avenue and Sixth Street.

The condominium market is based on six complexes: Basilica, Flagship Wharf, Parris Landing, Shipway Place, Constellation Wharf, and Nautica. Sale prices in the Row Houses are not controlled by the market, but are sold under Boston Redevelopment Authority restrictions, which place ceilings on the selling price and income-qualifications on buyers.

Colombosian cited 36 sales of condominiums in the five inside-the-gate

complexes through November 2011. “This is an incredible market right now and the numbers are way up from last



year,” she says. Figures from Dempsey Carney show the average sale this year through October to be about \$498,000. Time on the market is approximately 107 days, fewer days than last year’s average.

Grancey notes that in the waterfront luxury market, buyers are less subject to lending conditions than other properties despite the fact that real estate values between 2008 and 2010 in Boston overall suffered a decline. “Bank lending has been tight, but I think we are at the bottom now,” she said. Sales have increased in the last six months because of pent-up demand. “Money is cheaper now for those who can get a mortgage,” she says.



These brokers say the Navy Yard’s main attractions remain — spectacular water views, piers, walkability, historic fabric, and a quiet oasis close to downtown.

Comments? Letters to the Editor? Send an email to Friends of Charlestown Navy Yard at info@friendscny.org