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PORT OF PROVIDENCE BUSINESSES FORM PROVIDENCE WORKING WATERFRONT ALLIANCE

Alliance calls on city and state officials to protect Providence's working waterfront and the vital role it plays in the region's economy.

PROVIDENCE, SEPTEMBER 13 – A new coalition of Port of Providence-area businesses today announced the formation of the Providence Working Waterfront Alliance (PWWA). PWWA members have come together to highlight the vital role that Providence's working waterfront plays in the city, state, and region's economies, and to advocate for protecting this unique resource from incompatible uses such as condominium and marina developments.

Despite the regional economic importance and good jobs provided by port-related companies, the City Plan Commission is moving forward with plans to rezone much of Providence's working waterfront. In August, the Commission passed a draft Comprehensive Plan that would rezone the Allens Avenue Corridor – north of Thurbers Avenue and south of the relocated I-195 – for mixed uses such as residential condominiums, marinas, hotels, retail shops, and restaurants. The plan also envisions relocating current working waterfront businesses to the area south of Thurbers Avenue, including ProvPort and Fields Point.

"The city apparently wants to replace successful companies that have operated in Providence Harbor for more than 100 years with plans for flashy condos, hotels, and marinas," said Captain E. Howard McVay, Jr., President of Northeast Marine Pilots. "This gentrification of Providence's working waterfront is shortsighted. It may increase the city's property tax revenues, but it will come at the expense of existing successful taxpaying businesses, good blue collar jobs, and a regional economic resource that will never be rebuilt."

The Port of Providence has many highly desirable characteristics including a 40-foot deep water channel, easy access to railways and highways, and a hub location able to serve a broad market. Due to these strengths, the port is among the top 50 in the United States and serves as a gateway to the regional and global economies. Over 2,000 ships per year use the port to offload salt, cement, asphalt, and petroleum products, and load up with recycled metal for export to international markets. In total, more than 9 million tons of cargo move through the port every year.

Port of Providence fuel terminals also supply virtually all of the heating oil for Rhode Island, Worcester County, Cape Cod and the islands, and eastern Connecticut households and businesses. In Rhode Island alone, there

are more than 450,000 oil heat customers. In addition, the port is Rhode Island's only source of residual heavy fuel oil for hospitals, universities, commercial buildings, state and municipal buildings, and utilities.

Providence working waterfront businesses employ hundreds of direct employees and are responsible for thousands of related jobs including tradesmen, truck drivers, and service technicians. These blue collar jobs provide good salaries and benefits. According to a recent study by the American Association of Port Authorities, port-sector workers earn, on average, about \$50,000.

"The Port of Providence is an essential regional economic resource that must be protected," said Joel Cohen, Chairman of the PWWA, and Vice President of Promet Marine Services. "Providence's working waterfront businesses might not be the prettiest places, but they provide good paying blue collar jobs, and meet the region's shipping, energy, heating, ship repair, and road construction needs."

Recognizing the economic importance of the Port of Providence, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently completed a \$65 million dredging project to ensure continued 40-foot deep water access to the port. This investment will help Providence's working waterfront businesses compete for increased cargo traffic being created by rapidly growing overseas trade volume. In addition, our region's over congested highways are also creating demand for new shipping options like short-sea shipping. The Port of Providence is uniquely positioned to benefit from this emerging shipping method which moves goods via waterways on smaller ships and barges from larger ports to smaller feeder ports.

"Deep water access is a requirement for our business," said David Kinzel, Sprague Energy's Providence terminal manager. "That's why we have recently invested over a \$1 million to dredge our piers and upgrade our facilities to handle increased shipping volume."

PWWA members believe that most of the proposed mixed uses envisioned by the draft Comprehensive Plan are incompatible with a working waterfront. For example, recreational boating from proposed marinas would directly interfere with heavy ship traffic in the port. Similarly, condo residents are sure to complain about the loud noises and industrial activity produced by typical working waterfront operations. PWWA members also believe that there are no suitable alternative locations for their facilities. There is minimal space available at the ProvPort facility, and state officials have already indicated that they do not want heavy industrial uses at Quonset Point, which also lacks a 40-foot deep water channel.

In the coming months, the PWWA will be working to educate city officials, legislators, and the public about the economic importance and proud history of Providence's working waterfront.

Members of the PWWA include J. Goodison Company, Narragansett Improvement, Northeast Marine Pilots, the Oil Heat Institute of Rhode Island, Philips Services Corporation, Promet Marine Services, Providence Steamboat, and Sprague Energy.

For more information, go to: www.providenceworkingwaterfront.org/.

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