

SAVING OUR SHIPS



DRYDOCKING UPDATE: A CRITICAL STEP FORWARD

After many months of planning and coordination, we are pleased to share an important milestone in the effort to drydock and preserve the historic vessels of the Buffalo Naval Park, including USS The Sullivans and USS Croaker.

On Tuesday, January 20, the Common Council of the City of Buffalo approved a contract change order that authorizes the first phase of physical work required before either vessel can safely be moved for repair. This approval does not change the overall scope of the drydocking project, nor does it represent a request for new funding. Instead, it allows the project to proceed, as anticipated, from planning and coordination into the first carefully sequenced phase of on-site execution.

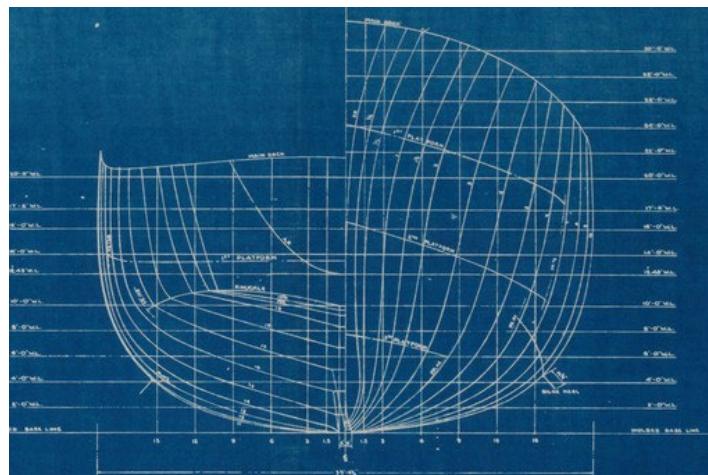
What is a change order and why was it needed?

In large, publicly managed capital projects, a change order is a standard administrative mechanism used to authorize the next defined phase of work under an existing contract. From a city administration perspective, it does not signal that something has gone wrong or that the project has changed direction. Rather, it reflects a deliberate transition point once

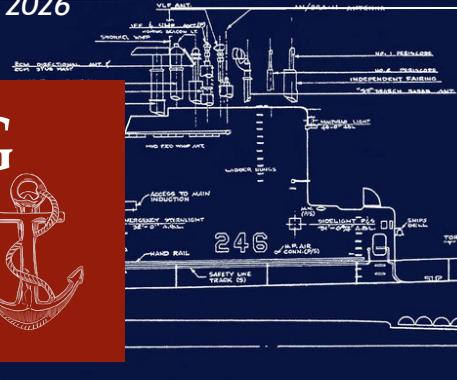
planning, engineering review, and regulatory coordination have advanced sufficiently.

In this case, the original contract between the City of Buffalo and T&T Marine Group focused on assessment, planning, and coordination for the drydocking and long-term repair of the Park's vessels. That work included evaluating vessel condition, developing safe work sequences, coordinating environmental and safety requirements, and preparing the regulatory framework necessary before any physical work could begin.

The approved change order expands that scope in an expected and appropriate way. It authorizes T&T Marine Group to move from planning into the first tranche of tangible, on-site work that must be completed before drydocking can safely occur. This progression follows best practices for publicly funded historic rehabilitation and complex marine preservation projects of this scale.



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Built: General Dynamics Electric Boat, Groton, CT
 Commissioned: April, 1944
 Decommissioned: April 1968
 World War II combat record: South Pacific, sank 8 Japanese ships including light cruiser Nagara

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What does this approval allow us to do now?

Before either vessel can enter drydock, several environmental and safety prerequisites must be completed. Chief among them is the controlled removal of oil and residue from exterior ballast tanks, beginning with the submarine Croaker. This step is required before any welding, hull repair, or vessel movement can take place at a drydock facility.

While pumping oil from a vessel may sound straightforward, on an eighty-year-old historic boat it is a highly technical operation that must be executed with precision. A naval architect will be on site to carefully plan and monitor the removal of fluids from the tanks to ensure vessel stability is maintained throughout the process.

Each gallon of diesel fuel weighs approximately seven pounds. If, for example, a single ballast tank on the port side of Croaker has a capacity of 14,000 gallons, fully emptying that tank would result in a weight shift of roughly 98,000 pounds on one side of the vessel. If that same tank were instead filled with water, each gallon would weigh approximately 8.34 pounds, increasing the total shifted weight to more than 116,000 pounds. Either scenario, if not properly counterbalanced, could create instability.

Additional complexities include the condition of aging tank structures, existing piping capacity, environmental containment requirements, and the potential need for controlled pressurization of compromised tanks. These calculations and safeguards are essential to protecting the vessel, the workforce, and the surrounding environment. This is precisely why this work must be carefully planned, sequenced, and executed by experienced marine professionals, and why the change order was a necessary and appropriate step before proceeding.

What has been happening behind the scenes?

Since our last update, substantial progress has continued, even if much of it has not been visible to the public.

Working in close coordination with the City of Buffalo, T&T Marine Group has been conducting detailed engineering review, safety planning, and logistical coordination to prepare for this phase of work. This has included development of fluid-removal plans, vessel stability modeling, and early technical coordination with the repair facility, DonJon Shipyard, in Erie, Pennsylvania.



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Preparation for this phase has also required sustained cross-agency coordination. In addition to the City and its marine management partner, planning has involved collaboration with the **New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the United States Coast Guard**, among others. Each plays a critical role in environmental protection, worker safety, navigational safety, and regulatory compliance.

This level of coordination is time-intensive by design. It ensures that when physical work begins, it can proceed safely, responsibly, and without interruption.

What comes next?

If remaining administrative elements are completed as anticipated this spring, mobilization of personnel and equipment could begin shortly thereafter. As conditions allow, visitors may begin to see dredging barges, crane barges, dive boats and divers, tugboats, clamshell dredging equipment, tank trucks, and other specialized marine assets converging on the Park to carry out this work.

This phase will also allow for the removal of remaining oil residues from The Sullivans and for additional environmental and safety preparations aboard both vessels. These steps

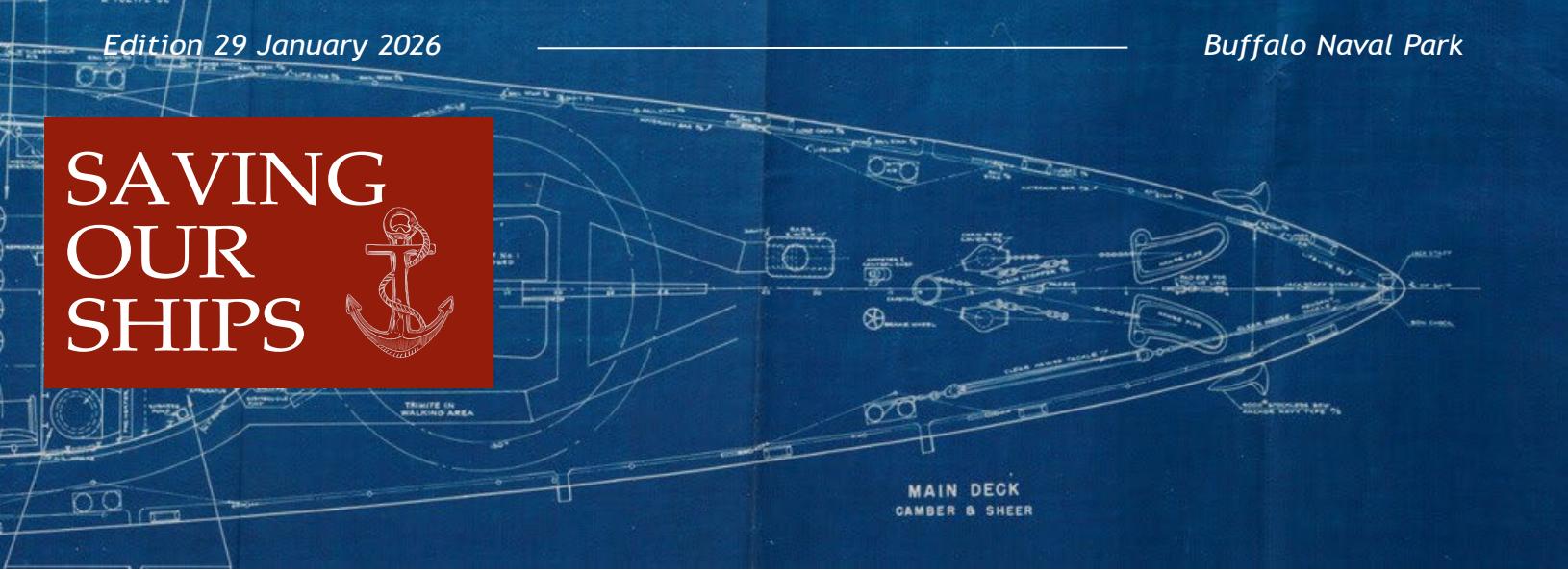


are expensive and time-consuming, but they are essential prerequisites before the fleet can safely travel to the repair facility.

Discussions with DonJon Shipyard regarding drydock planning and scope have begun in earnest. For The Sullivans, current objectives include replacement of severely deteriorated steel from approximately one foot above the waterline down to the keel. Unknown conditions, such as the state of internal framing and longitudinal members, may influence final scope and cost once the ship is fully accessible in drydock.

Croaker will require a keel-up assessment, and much of her repair scope has yet to be fully determined. Unique factors such as flammable interior tank coatings and inaccessible structural members will influence both process and cost. Visible deterioration at her bow, stern, and along much of her superstructure underscores the urgency of stabilizing her as a floating vessel and ensuring safe public access.

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Gratitude for our partners

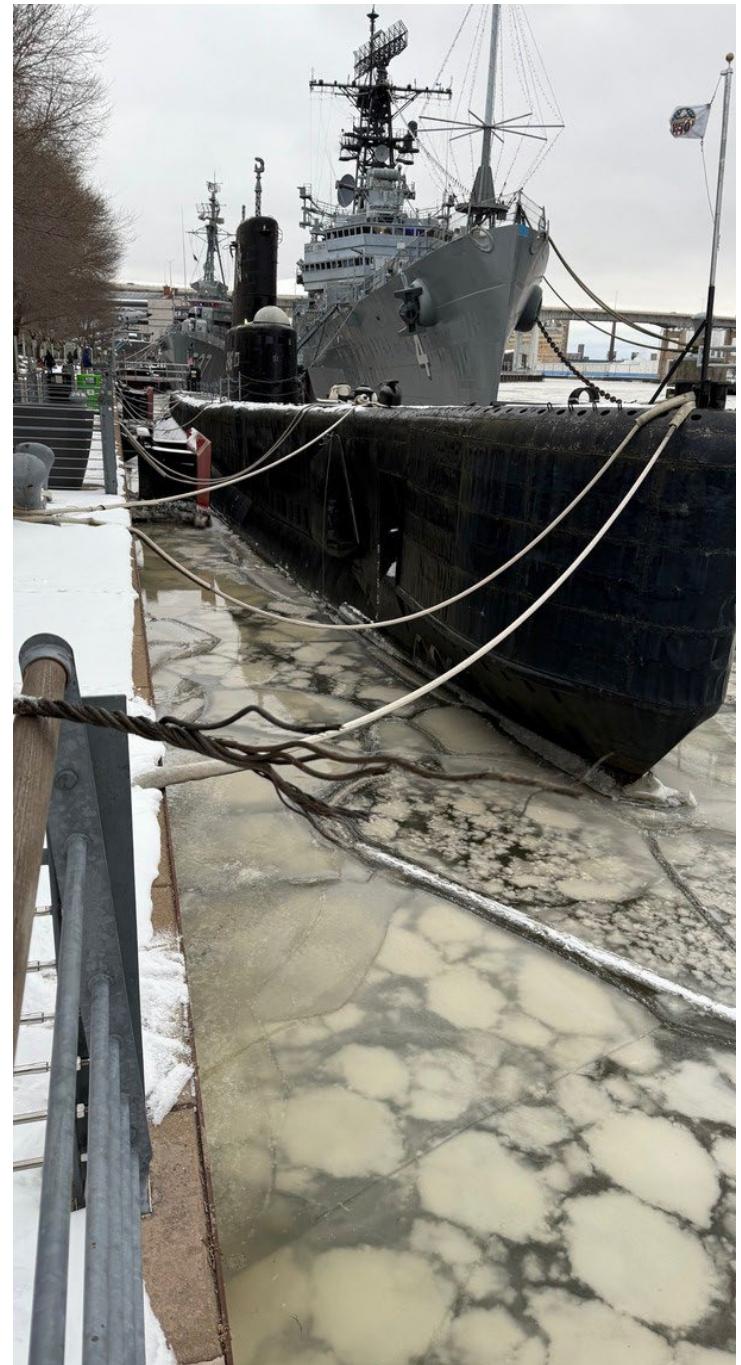
Progress of this scale is only possible through sustained partnership and patience. We are deeply grateful to the City of Buffalo, Erie County, the State of New York, including Governor Kathy Hochul, and our federal partners, including Senator Chuck Schumer, for their continued commitment to preserving these irreplaceable vessels.

This project involves overlapping jurisdictions, strict environmental safeguards, and complex funding structures. The steady cooperation and shared commitment of our public partners have been essential in reaching this point.

Looking ahead

After a long period defined by planning and preparation, this approval marks a meaningful transition toward visible progress. While significant work remains, we are encouraged by the momentum now building and by the professionalism and collaboration among all parties involved.

We look forward to sharing additional updates as this next phase advances and thank our supporters for their continued trust and patience as we work to ensure that the Park's historic fleet is preserved for generations to come.



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CURATORS CORNER BY SHANE STEPHENSON

With the positive news coming from Buffalo's Common Council this week, the Naval Park can begin the shift from crisis and survivability to preservation.

This is a once in a generation project and will secure USS The Sullivans and USS Croaker as an attraction on Buffalo's Waterfront for years to come. Once this plan is seen through to its positive conclusion, we can begin the work necessary to secure a ship's maintenance period for our largest artifact, USS Little Rock.

For now, as two of our tour-able artifacts get ready to go under tow a great distance for the first time since July 1977, it is necessary to secure the interior spaces and to ensure that the work outside won't be detrimental to the spaces inside. As curator, I stand ready with the crew and volunteers to secure shipboard and exhibit artifacts.

Once the vessels are back secured in the Buffalo Harbor again, we'll bring them back to life in new and engaging ways to continue to tell the story of the crew that served aboard, and how the vessels protected America's interests from WWII through the Cold War.

