



Testimony of Roland Lewis, President and CEO

On General Waterfront Issues

THE METROPOLITAN WATERFRONT ALLIANCE

Before the Joint Committees of Waterfront and Economic Development

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Good afternoon. My name is Roland Lewis and I am President of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance, a coalition of 323 groups working together to transform the New York Harbor and its waterways into a world class resource for work, play, transit and education.

All of us at MWA applaud the Economic Development Corporation for producing this very important study that highlights the existing need for more dry-docks and support facilities, and I'd like to thank the Committee and especially Chairman Nelson and Chairman White for bringing us all here to discuss what we ought to do next to improve and strengthen our working waterfront

1. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

I'll start with Emergency Preparedness. One of my first meetings as President of MWA was with Rick Larrabee, Director of Port Commerce for the Port Authority. I'll never

forget him telling me that we are so dependent on our bridges that if something happened to the George Washington and Verazano Bridges this afternoon and they were closed for any period of time, New Yorkers would know what they're eating for dinner tonight or tomorrow night, but after that no one knows how we're going to get food onto the island. One of the early recommendations coming from our Waterfront Works Task Force is to ask the City of New York, the State of New York, and the State of New Jersey to create a passenger and freight ferry master plan and implementation strategy, both to reduce congestion in the near term and to ensure that we have the tools we need to use the waterways to meet our mobility needs should disaster strike again.

2. DREDGE REMOVAL: “DROWNING IN OUR OWN MUD”

We've been hearing more and more lately that the very water dependent businesses we are discussing today are drowning in their own mud. In the last six months we've visited many New York and New Jersey maritime businesses including Caddell Dry Dock on Staten Island, GMD Shipyard Operations in Brooklyn and Bayonne, and Union Dry Dock across the river in Hoboken. Every one of them is threatened by the increasing cost of dredging as well as the difficulty in getting a permit to dredge. In this conversation about waterfront land use, we have to be aware that these challenges extend well into the waterways where the jurisdiction of state and federal agencies make it more complicated for these businesses to function. Right now we are spending more than 100 million dollars per year deepening the main shipping channels coming into this Port. Why are we subsidizing Global Shipping Companies based elsewhere but not willing to support local water dependent businesses? The little guys – Marina operators, dry dock repair

facilities, even parks, must bear the cost of \$100 per cubic yard to dredge out the naturally accumulating silt. And much of this dredge is contaminated through no fault of the owner. In addition, the smallest waterfront user must perform the same complicated and expensive dredge testing for contaminants before moving sediments. The added cost of tens of thousands of dollars for these tests is an extraordinary burden to place on maritime users of our waterfront.

Our Waterfront Works Task Force recommends that we:

- Create a viable plan to use and reuse this dredged sediment in beneficial ways, whether for habitat restoration or construction;
- Identify additional funding sources through agencies such as the Army Corps or the Port Authority to support the dredging needs of these small businesses for removal, remediation and testing.

3. JOBS

While much of the container and terminal operations have in fact moved to New Jersey, the support facilities that make our ports run smoothly, such as tug operations and dry docks, are located almost entirely in the City of New York. Further, the regional economy is dependent on the shipping industry which is in turn dependent on the maritime facilities that are under such stress on our waterfront. *We should view the working waterfront as a source of good jobs for everyday New Yorkers and a critical part of diversified economy.* For instance, when we traded 150 skilled jobs that existed at the New York Shipyard on Erie Basin for 300 or more retail jobs in the IKEA store that

displaced it, have we really gained anything? Working waterfront jobs include skilled trades, such as welders, metal workers and engine mechanics. These water dependent businesses can only be on the waterfront. Big box retail can literally go anywhere, so when we lose water dependent jobs for non-water dependent jobs we may never get those jobs back. As the head of the New York Shipping Association (and Co-Chair of our Waterfront Works Task Force) points out, the Port of New York and New Jersey is responsible for the employment of upwards of 230,000 people, both in New Jersey and New York. This is an amount equal to those who work in education, tourism, or even healthcare; and we all look at those sectors as critical to our economy. So are the Port and especially the water dependent jobs located there.

Among the preliminary recommendations of the Task Force:

- Revise and strengthen Waterfront Zoning Rules to protect maritime users;
- Create a low interest loan fund to support green and clean jobs at the water's edge; whether in solar or tidal energy, barge-based recycling operations, or other environmentally responsible businesses;
- Create industrial employment districts that gives greater precedence to meaningful job creation as a land use goal;
- Conduct a water dependent business study to better understand the value of our barges, tugs, and ferries, as well as excursion, charter, and fishing boats in terms of employment and target areas for growth;
- And lastly, to make sure we have the labor force to fill these jobs and grow this sector of the economy, we need education.

4. EDUCATION

We need to continue to invest in the educational programs and institutions that are training the next generation of workers. Our Harbor Education Task Force has brought together more than 50 such groups, ranging from the New York Harbor School, to the Maritime Technology Program at Kingsborough Community College, to SUNY Maritime, and many others. What we need to do is develop:

- An educational continuum which links public schools, with community colleges, universities, and vocational institutions to make sure students know these opportunities are out there;
- Workshops and other continuing education venues for waterfront designers, planners, and managers to better understand the needs as well as values of accommodating tugs and visiting ships, whether for education or emergency access and egress;
- And more direct education of boaters, the public, and policy makers to help broaden the understanding and support for maritime businesses, tugboat, barge ports and the wonderful mix of working waterfront facilities we are lucky to have and also desperately need.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.