

OT News

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Queen Mary Updates

Recently there have been a number of news stories published about the future of the *Queen Mary*. This issue of the *OT News* is forwarding these for your information.



Queen Mary Has new manager

City hires company and expects Oct. 1 reopening of dilapidated attraction, profit from it next year

by Kristy Hutchings ... Orange County Register

The Long Beach City Council on Tuesday [June 21, 2022] approved a new contract with one of the country's top hotel management companies to oversee the *Queen Mary's* operations—finally carving out a clear path to the ship's reopening after its shutdown for more than two years

“We are one step closer to the grand reopening of our *Queen Mary*,” said City Council Member Mary Zendejas, whose district includes the ship. “I’m hoping that we can reinvigorate our *Queen Mary* and what it brings to our city.”

The *Queen Mary* closed to the public in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the World War II-era ship already had fallen into massive disrepair under the management of its previous operator, Urban Commons, prompting the ship’s continued closure.

Urban Commons declared bankruptcy and gave up its 66-year lease in 2021, bringing the *Queen Mary* back under city control for the first time in 40 years. A few years prior, the city gave Urban Commons \$23 million to fund major ship repairs, but a 2021 city audit found those repairs were never completed.

An earlier report, conducted in 2017, estimated all necessary repairs—including work on the ship’s hull and superstructure frame—could cost \$235 million to \$285 million.

In April, Long Beach removed 20 deteriorated lifeboats from the *Queen Mary* that were worsening the ship’s structural integrity by overloading it with nearly 100 tons of excess weight—a major milestone in critical repairs needed to reopen the ship to the public, according to a city news release from mid-May.

Those improvements were necessary for the city to prepare the ship for reopening, slated for October.

Evolution, the hospitality company, will operate the *Queen Mary* hotel and oversee about \$1 million in repairs to ensure a safe reopening, including replacing the ship’s boilers and elevator, repairing restrooms and plumbing, and upgrading the parking.

Evolution will be responsible for the ship’s overall maintenance and *Queen Mary*-related events for five years, according to a staff report for the Tuesday council meeting.

Long Beach, however, will continue overseeing major capital improvements necessary for the ship’s overall restoration and preservation.

The city also will handle programming at the nearby Harry Bridges Memorial Park.

That, City Manager Tom Modica said during the council session, is the crux of what makes this most recent *Queen Mary* contract different from the city’s previous lease agreements.

“In the past 40 years, we really tried to manage this asset by shifting all the responsibilities and benefits to a private company”, Modica said. “They normally had to pay for that right, so they were carrying a lot of debt to do that.”

That long-term lease model, especially Urban Commons’ case, proved unsuccessful, which prompted the city to look into alternative, shorter-term contracts, Modica said.

“What we’re doing now is basically cutting out that middle partner,” he added. “We now have increased responsibilities, but now we also are able to get some of the benefits.”

It’ll cost about \$2.87 million to cover all reopening improvements and reopening costs, the staff report said. That money will come from the city’s Tidelands Area Fund Group.

Under the terms of the contract, Evolution will be subject to request financial audits and must submit monthly finance reports. Evolution also must submit an annual budget before October 1 every year, the staff report said.

Evolution, the staff report said, anticipates that revenue from the *Queen Mary’s* operations will fully offset and city investments by 2023, with an estimated city profit approaching \$1 million by then. In 2024 and the years beyond, the staff report said, net revenue is projected to exceed \$7 million annually.

“The \$7 million projection is conservative,” Vice Mayor Rex Richardson said during the Tuesday night council meeting, noting the estimate doesn’t include revenue from other events and activities hosted off the ship but in its vicinity.

The next round of major repairs, currently underway, include enhancing the ship’s bulkheads and bilge pump system, long Beach’s May 13 news release said. Those fixes will further strengthen the *Queen Mary’s* structure and will help prevent damage should flooding occur.

The contract will go into effect July 1 for reopening activities. It’ll be renewed for the five year term upon the ship’s reopening October 1.

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This article is being shared with the SSHSA Southern California Chapter Membership as
an update on the status of the *Queen Mary*.

Port of Long Beach moves forward on independent assessments for *Queen Mary*

by Donna Littlejohn ... Daily Breeze

The Long Beach harbor commission has commissioned independent assessments for the *Queen Mary*, the World War II-era ship that could be transferred from city to Port of Long Beach control.

To complete the ship's condition assessment, the commission on Monday, June 27, OK'd contracts with Lloyd's Register Americas Advisory Services, ABL USA Inc. and NRC Environmental Services.

Long Beach is considering transferring Pier H, which includes the *Queen Mary*, to the port, with city officials saying harbor officials are better equipped to manage the waterfront property. But that possibility prompted the independent assessments.

Taking over the *Queen Mary*, which has been in disrepair for years, would likely require a massive investment by the port.

The Long Beach City Council last week approved a new contract with a hotel management company to oversee the ship's operations, with officials looking to reopen the *Queen Mary* in October.

ABL will provide stability modeling, inspection planning and site inspection on the ship while NRC will provide ballast and fuel tank cleaning that is required to allow for safe access to inspect the tanks and hull of the *Queen Mary*.

Lloyd's Register Americas Advisory Services, meanwhile will provide document and field measurement reviews, according to a board report, as well as onboard inspections, strength assessments and other evaluations. That company will also provide the port with a statement of facts detailing the ship's condition.

The work "will help the port determine the impact of the potential transfer of ownership of the *Queen Mary* as part of the Pier H transfer," a board report said. The assessments will cost the port about \$2.7 million.

Budget savings from other projects will be used to fund the assessments.

Negotiations, meanwhile, continue between the city and port on the proposed transfer.

“The goal is to estimate the impact to the port, if ownership of Pier H and the Queen Mary are to be transferred to the port,” the board report said. “Particularly for the Queen Mary, even though various marine surveys and assessments have been completed by the city over the last few years, staff feels an independent comprehensive condition assessment is necessary to further understand the current conditions of the vessel.”

The Queen Mary originally closed to the public in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic — but the legendary ship had already fallen into massive disrepair under the management of its previous operators, most recently, Urban Commons.

Urban Commons declared bankruptcy and gave up its 66-year lease in 2021, bringing the Queen Mary back under city control for the first time in 40 years. A few years prior, the city gave Urban Commons \$23 million to fund major ship repairs — but a 2021 city audit found that those repairs were never completed.

An earlier report, conducted in 2017, estimated all necessary repairs — including work on the ship’s hull and structural frame — could cost anywhere from \$235 to \$285 million.

Port staff, for its part, previously told the Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners that taking over the Queen Mary could potentially put some of the port’s own planned projects in jeopardy, especially if the nation slides into a recession.

Perhaps most importantly, portions of the ambitious Pier B rail yard development could be impacted, staff said in early May.

Completing the independent assessments will require historic document reviews, onboard inspections, strength assessment, ballast tank inspections and fuel tank content removal and cleanup.

Commissioners, during their Monday meeting, addressed several complaints from International Longshore and Warehouse Union members regarding a grievance they’d filed with NRC.

Port officials stressed that hiring ILWU members would be enforced under this separate contract.

Thomas Jelenic, vice president of the Pacific Merchant Shipping Association, criticized the process, saying the ship's condition likely hasn't improved in recent years with ongoing exposure to salt water and increasing issues of rust.

Sam Joumblat, managing director of Finance and Administration for the Port of Long Beach, said the work will take about a year and efforts will be made not to disrupt public events based on the city's desire to open the ship before then.

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This article is being shared with the SSHSA Southern California Chapter Membership as an update on the status of the *Queen Mary*.

SHAQTOBERFEST to Debut at the *Queen Mary*

by Alysia Gray Painter ... NBC Los Angeles, Channel 4

The legendary athlete's new fall-fun fest will offer trick-or-treating and haunted trails.

SHAQTOBERFEST will open in late September at the Long Beach landmark Basketball legend Shaquille O'Neal and Thirteenth Floor Entertainment, the creator of the LA Haunted Hayride, are presenting the brand-new event Families can enjoy trick-or-treating, "ghoulish" games, and other activities in the afternoon; nighttime will bring out more monsters and eerie aspects

Finding frightful fun for your tots, but nothing that's too terrifying, can be a bit challenging come October.

True, Halloween night offers kids the joy of going door-to-door for candy, but many of the happenings ahead of October's final day have a more adult edge to them, with bigger scares and grown-up thrills.

Basketball Hall-of-Famer Shaquille O'Neal wanted to create a Halloween go-out that rocks a chilling but cheerful vibe, something that children can enjoy alongside their parents.

To make that not-too-dastardly dream a reality, the celebrated athlete and sports analyst is teaming up with Thirteenth Floor Entertainment Group, the creative company behind the LA Haunted Hayride, to fashion a new October-awesome tradition.

Sweet: SHAQTOBERFEST will debut in fall 2022, with a home that has plenty of haunted history. It's the *Queen Mary*, Long Beach's world-famous ocean liner, a place that is said to sport a famous phantom or two or thirty.

Six atmospheric areas will dot the spacious area outside the ship, giving visitors opportunities to play games (yep, they'll be a bit "ghoulish"), spots to snack and sip themed beverages, haunted trails, live entertainment, and, oh yeah, trick-or-treating opportunities.

Good to know? The afternoons at SHAQTOBERFEST will be all about kid-cute trick-or-treating adventures, with family-style experiences ruling the vibrant festival. As the sun sets, eekier figures will roam the haunted trails, and the night will grow ever more chilling.

"Halloween can't come soon enough," said O'Neal. "Thirteenth Floor Entertainment and I have some tricks up our sleeves to make this the most spook-tacular Halloween event ever!"

Other features include narration by Mr. O'Neal, "energetic music and lights" after night falls, and the chance to don those Halloween costumes ahead of Halloween.

"We are beyond thrilled to be partnering with Shaq and ABG Entertainment for a truly unique Halloween experience coming this fall," said Chris Strafford, CEO and Founding Partner of Thirteenth Floor Entertainment.

"SHAQTOBERFEST will be unlike any other Halloween attraction that we have ever produced, and we couldn't be more excited to be launching it at one of the area's most well-known locations and show our fans what we've created for them."

"Not to mention, we're really excited to be able to produce an event in Long Beach, which has a long-running history of hosting amazing Halloween celebrations."

Summer is here, which means we are now on the precipice of autumn, when SHAQTOBERFEST will make its Long Beach debut at one of our region's most hallowed and Halloween-y spaces, the *Queen Mary*.

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