

## NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

**RE:** **RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF ALDERS** Authorizing the mayor to apply for, execute, acknowledge, implement, and deliver any and all documents as may be considered necessary or appropriate for a Certified Local Government Grant in the amount of 30,000 from the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development's State Historic Preservation Office for an archaeological survey of Long Wharf Pier. (City Plan Director)

**REPORT:** 1533-10

**ADVICE:** Approval

### BACKGROUND

The City of New Haven is undertaking a project to conduct an archaeological survey of Long Wharf Pier and use it to create a long-term preservation plan, as well as produce documentation for public interpretation of the site. We are requesting up to \$30,000, to be matched by the City with previously authorized Coastal Bond Funds. Once the scope of the work is finalized, the amount requested may be reduced.

Long Wharf Pier played a central role in New Haven's commerce and maritime industry from its construction in the 1660's until it fell out of use in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. As the harbor filled with sediment, the wharf was repeatedly extended to reach navigable depths, reaching a length between 3,500 and 3,900 feet by 1811—making it the longest pier in the United States at the time. The most significant renovation occurred in 1810, when William Lanson, a prominent black New Haven engineer and entrepreneur, was hired to construct a 1,500-foot extension. Over time, the New Haven Harbor was filled to accommodate the railroad, highway, and other uses, covering and effectively shortening Long Wharf Pier to its current length of approximately 650 feet. The site today is well positioned for public interpretation due to its location on the New Haven waterfront, adjacent to Long Wharf Park and the soon-to-be-completed Boathouse at Canal Dock.

A preliminary archaeological assessment of Long Wharf Pier was conducted in 2008 by Archaeological and Historical Services, Inc in connection with proposed improvements to I-95. It involved a field inspection, as well as background research and a comprehensive review of historic materials about the wharf. In addition, the assessment determined the pier to be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. It recommended further archaeological study of Long Wharf, which could shed light on the evolution of wharf-building technology. The 2008 assessment will serve as a supplement to the proposed survey, providing a baseline of documentation and historical background.

### PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The Supplemental CLG grant would partially fund the archaeological survey. As part of the proposed assessment, surveys would be conducted along the length of the pier during low tide. Timbers associated with the pier would be dated in order to more precisely identify Long Wharf's construction and rebuilding dates. Core samples of silt deposits would also be obtained and analyzed. By using the 2008 documentation as a baseline, this survey would make it possible to document and examine the impacts of major storm events of the past decade on Long Wharf Pier. This information would then be used to create a long-term preservation plan for the pier. The SCLG grant would help fund Long Wharf Pier's nomination to the State Register of Historic Places, as well as compilation of a booklet on the pier's history, adhering to SHPO guidelines for Preserve Booklets.

Given Long Wharf's historical importance, as well as New Haven's recent efforts to reconnect its neighborhoods to the waterfront (including the soon-to-be-finished Boathouse at Canal Dock just northeast of the pier), Long Wharf is positioned to play an important role in exploring and preserving New Haven history.

### ADVICE

The Commission finds the Order in the best interest of the City and recommends approval.

**ADOPTED:** July 19, 2017  
Edward Mattison  
Chair

**ATTEST:**   
Karyn M. Gilvarg, AIA  
Executive Director