

November 30, 2018

**THAMES RIVER HERITAGE PARK FOUNDATION  
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS  
WATER TAXI SERVICE AND BOAT TOUR OPERATOR  
FOR THE THAMES RIVER HERITAGE PARK**

**INTRODUCTION**



The Thames River Heritage Park Foundation (TRHPF) is soliciting proposals from Licensed Commercial Tour Boat Operators (referred to here as “Operator”) to provide a Water Taxi Shuttle Service among at least three points linking the cultural and historic sites of the Thames River Heritage Park (TRHP), as well as to operate boat tours in the lower Thames River estuary. The Operator will utilize the two former US Navy Willard launches owned by the TRHPF (*See Appendix A attached for boat description.*). The hop-on hop-off Water Taxi Service currently operates Friday through Sunday and holidays which may increase over time. The Boat Tour schedule will be based on the

number of tours chartered. The contract will be a three-year contract with the potential for additional three-year renewals.

**The following three sites make up the Water Taxi route:**

City Pier – Historic Waterfront District, downtown New London

Fort Trumbull State Park in New London

Thames River Landing - Thames Street in Groton

The Operator will be expected to be available for additional shuttle service upon request with mutually agreed upon advance notice for special events and charters.

The Boat Tours will operate in the Thames River estuary as far south as Ledge Lighthouse and as far north as the length and theme of 1-2 hour tours will allow.

**THAMES RIVER HERITAGE PARK DESCRIPTION**

The Thames River Heritage Park is a collection of historic, educational and recreational partner attractions, which, similar to Boston's Freedom Trail, links together existing cultural and historic resources on both sides of the Thames River in New London and Groton. By creating a major attraction in the region, tourists are encouraged to extend their stay, creating additional economic opportunities for regional businesses. Studies have shown that heritage tourism is among the fastest growing segments of the tourism market and that visitors within this segment spend more



than their non-heritage counterparts. The water taxi connects two state Parks — Fort Trumbull State Park in New London and Fort Griswold Battlefield State Park in Groton — by boat. The other TRHP sites that are within walking distance to each of the landings include, at Thames River Landing in Groton: the Avery-Copp House, the Groton Bank National Register Historic District, Ebenezer Avery House, US Subvets World War II National Memorial East, and the historic Bill Memorial Library. About two miles up the river is the Submarine Force Museum/USS Nautilus. On the New London side,

in addition to the landing at Fort Trumbull State Park, is Eugene O’Neill’s Monte



Cristo Cottage — located a short distance away — and within walking distance from the landing at New London’s Historic District are the Garde Arts Center, the Hempsted Houses, Nathan Hale Schoolhouse, Waterfront Park and the National Register Historic Waterfront District. In addition, the US Coast Guard Academy, Connecticut College, and the Lyman Allyn Art Museum are located adjacent to or within a short distance from the water. The TRHPF boasts many institutional partners as well including but not limited to New London Landmarks, New London County Historical Society, seCTer, SECT Cultural Coalition, UCONN/Avery Point Maritime Studies and Sea Grant.

The vision of the Thames River Heritage Park Foundation is to be a network of people, communities, institutions, sites and stories connected by and to the historic waterfront of the Thames River and Long Island Sound. Our water taxis help us to make these connections. It is a unique way to transport visitors to our historic and cultural sites on both sides of the river. As importantly, they provide a chance to introduce riders to the places they can visit when they debark.

## **SCOPE OF SERVICES**

The Operator shall employ fully licensed boat captains and appropriate crew to staff two fully licensed boats, with certification for approximately 40 passengers each, owned by the City of Groton and maintained by TRHPF. The boats are Navy Utility launches. The specifications for the boats are attached to the RFP as Appendix A.

The contract will be three (3) years in duration with the potential for additional 3-year renewals. Captains and crew will be expected to act as our park ambassadors. When operating the Water Taxi, captains will be provided brief narrations to follow, general area information and will be charged with pointing out landmarks to the passengers as the boat motors up and down the river. Mates will be expected to interact with passengers, answer questions about the area, local events, sell merchandise, get survey information, and assure passengers have a positive experience.

TRHPF will provide a ½ day of training — paid for by TRHPF based on Operator’s hourly rates — for Operator’s staff to familiarize themselves with the Park sites and the area so they can best assist passengers to make their experience a positive one.

The Operator and its staff will represent the TRHPF and will not promote any other business while operating the TRHPF Boats. The Operator’s staff will wear TRHPF apparel, will promote the sale of TRHPF merchandise including but not limited to t-shirts and hats and will distribute and collect surveys as requested by TRHPF.

The Operator and its staff shall distribute a TRHPF Map & Guide — provided by TRHPF — to passengers the first time they board the boat. They will check local events calendars at the start of each weekend to inform riders of activities and events in the Park.

## **Water Taxi Schedule**

The Operator shall provide crew for the 3-stop hop-on hop-off water taxi schedule listed below. The service is based on the use of one boat with the other boat reserved for back up, especially on busy occasions (such as Sailfest, Connecticut Maritime Festival) and for charters and tours.

### **The Water Taxi will operate Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and holidays as follows:**

- 2019 –May 24 through September 15
- 2020 - May 22 through September 13
- 2021 – May 29 through to September 12
- Note: Schedule subject to change upon mutual agreement.

### **The daily schedule will be as follows:**

Friday: 12:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.

Saturday: 10:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m.

Sunday & holidays: 10:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.

### **Landing sites and scheduled departures are as follows:**

Fort Trumbull State Park, New London - departs on the hour

Waterfront Park Historic Waterfront District, New London - departs 20 minutes after the hour

Thames River Landing, Groton - departs 40 minutes after the hour

The Water Taxi began service in 2016. Ridership for its three years of service is as follows:

2016 - Passenger count (per leg of three-leg circuit) 4,299

2017 – Passenger count (per leg of three-leg circuit) 6,537

2018 – Passenger count (per leg of three-leg circuit) 6,647

Attendance figures for the two state parks that are within the TRHP:

	<u>May-Sept. 2018</u>
Fort Griswold Battlefield State Park	48,800
Fort Trumbull State Park	60,000

## **Boat Tours**

In addition to operating the hop-on hop-off water taxi, the TRHPF seeks to operate boat tours. These tours would be at regularly scheduled times, primarily, late June through early-September. TRHPF and the selected Operator will work out an agreed upon schedule for tours. In addition to these tours, the boats are chartered by other groups for fundraisers and company outings. Prospective operators should provide projected costs associated with operating one-hour, 90-minute, and two-hour tours.

It is anticipated that TRHPF will have a dock at the Submarine Force Museum/USS Nautilus in 2020. TRHPF reserves the right to put out a Request for Proposal for this operation and/or may opt to renegotiate with the selected operator for this additional tour schedule.

**Description of the Boats**  
*(See Appendix A attached.)*

**Exclusive rights to operate:**

The Operator shall have exclusive rights to operate a water taxi using TRHPF boats only at the Thames River Heritage Park water taxi landings pursuant to a contract to be negotiated, under the auspices of the “Thames River Heritage Park” name, logo and brand, for the term of the contract. Nothing in the terms of this RFP or the contract should be construed so as to grant the operator an exclusive right of access to these sites otherwise (when the taxi is not in service). TRHPF sites remain the property of their respective owners and may be used by them for any reason and purposes that do not unreasonably interfere with the water shuttle services. Except for unusual circumstances, it is expected that the operator will be able to dock or moor the water taxi boats at or near these docks when the boats are not in use. The TRHPF will secure necessary agreements with CT DEEP and City of New London to use the respective docks.

**Other Terms and Conditions:**

The Operator shall comply with any and all conditions and requirements of the CT DEEP for use of the landings at Forts Trumbull and Griswold, with any and all conditions and with any and all conditions and requirements of the City of New London and/or its Port Authority for use of the landing at City Pier Historic Waterfront District.

The Operator should note that, from time to time the City of New London utilizes City Pier for large functions and festivals. This may require the Operator to relocate to another pier. Every effort will be made to accommodate the Operator so as to ensure business is not interrupted. Details will be made final during negotiations.

The Operator may negotiate with the TRHPF for excursions or functions not related to the Water Taxi or Boat Tour Schedule.

The TRHPF is located in a Security Zone. The United States Coast Guard or the United States Navy may close all docks/sites without notice in cases where National Security levels warrant.

**The Operator will be responsible for:**

1. Hiring and managing water taxi/tour personnel. All Personnel will not be TRHPF employees. They will be employed by the selected operator.
2. Training personnel
3. All personnel drug testing and screening
4. Scheduling water taxi and tour boat personnel
5. Coordinating with COI inspection/service from the US Coast Guard
6. Budgeting the operating expenses associated with labor for each of three seasons
7. Preparing the boats for 2019 and following seasons (cleaning, inspecting, testing all systems)
8. Making minor repairs and troubleshooting possible mechanical failures.
9. Coordinating with Crocker’s Boatyard for repairs, maintenance schedules, getting the boats in and out of the water on schedule.
10. Stocking the boat with ice and water every day. Checking and replenishing inventory of TRHPF map & guides (on the boats and at the landings), tickets, and other TRHPF printed material as requested.
11. Maintaining inventory and selling TRHPF merchandise.
12. Monitoring weather and communicating all delays to TRHPF Executive Director.

13. Executing emergency procedures in case of inoperability due to weather or other event.

**The Operator must be familiar with diesel engines.**

**Personnel:**

Selected Operator will be required to provide copies of valid USCG Licenses and Certifications (including for his or herself).

All captains must be licensed before he or she can operate the boats.

**OPERATOR REQUIREMENTS**

The following shall be required to operate Water Taxi and Boat Tour Services as part of the Thames River Heritage Park and should be considered an integral part of the RFP.

**1. U. S. Coast Guard requirements:**

The Operator shall meet, maintain and have on board all Licenses, Certifications and Requirements of the United States Coast Guard and any other state or federal agencies to operate a commercial passenger vessel.

The Operator shall have on board at all times a Captain and First Mate who shall meet and maintain all Licenses, Certifications and Requirements of the United States Coast Guard to operate a vessel of the tonnage used in this concession contract.

The Operator shall schedule and secure all necessary inspections and approvals for the TRHPF boats from the United States Coast Guard.

**2. Boat Maintenance and Repair**

The Operator will be responsible for identifying repairs needed in a timely manner and will coordinate with the TRHPF and the boatyard to schedule such repairs. The Operator shall be responsible for the overall daily maintenance of the boats. The Operator shall be required to provide daily written logs for inspections and documentation and/or fuel. TRHPF will be responsible for the costs to repair and insure the boats.

**3. Loading/unloading of passengers:**

The Operator shall insure that staff assists passengers when embarking and disembarking.

The Operator shall provide information on how fluctuating capacity would be handled, particularly for event weekends.

**4. Handicapped issues:**

The Operator shall enforce the TRHPF's Accessibility Policy which is posted on the TRHPF website.

**5. Security of the sites:**

The Operator shall secure Gates to the Docking facilities at Fort Trumbull and Fort Griswold after each arrival and departure.

**6. Trash:**

The Operator shall provide a trash receptacle aboard the vessel and shall be responsible for disposal of same.

**7. Storage of supplies:**

No storage of materials or supplies relating to the Water Taxi Service Operation shall be allowed at or on docking sites.

The Operator will provide an emergency number that TRHPF will post at each landing for passengers to call if stranded or for any unexpected delays.

**8. Meetings:**

The Operator will be expected/required to attend periodic meetings throughout the duration of the contract.

**SELECTION CRITERIA**

The selection of the Operator will depend on submission of all requested material and a demonstration of the ability to successfully operate tourism-related water taxi and boat tour services. The Operator must also demonstrate the ability to comply with all requirements prior to the commencement of operation. Other selection factors may include, but not be limited to, the following: references, crew experience, and fees.

**INFORMATION FOR PROPOSAL**

**The proposal should include, but not be limited to, the following information:**

**Business Information:**

1. Name and address of Company/Corporation
2. Name and address of Principal Owner of Business
3. Contact person with Business Phone, Email, Mobile Phone
4. Number of years in business
5. Business Plan for a Water Taxi Service to include:
  - Number of captains and crew to be employed
  - Hourly rates for captains and crew
  - Total costs per day for captains and crew for water taxi service
  - Total costs per 1-hour, 90-minute and 2 hour boat tours and charters
  - Expenses
  - Any other costs

**Experience:**

Describe any experience the company and/or staff has had in operating a water taxi service or related service as well as experience in the tourism-related industry and/or customer service field.

Describe any experience the company and/or staff have with mechanical knowledge and minor boat repair as it relates to or compares with the TRHPF Willard diesel engine utility boats.

Describe the maintenance procedure you would follow at the start of each operating day/weekend.

Describe any experience you have managing employees. (i.e., payroll, scheduling, customer complaints).

\*Optional:

Describe any experience you have developing, marketing and/or selling boat or river tours.

*\*This is not a criterion for submission. However, should you have experience we would like to know about it and would consider this in the review of proposals.*

**Operational and Procedural Issues:**

1. Describe how on-board emergencies (medical and non-medical) will be handled.
2. Provide information on how stranded patrons will be handled.
3. Provide information on a contingency plan should mechanical or other issues render the vessel inoperable.
4. Describe procedures related to cancellations due to inclement weather or other circumstances.

**Budget:**

**The Operator shall submit a projected budget for each of years 2019, 2020, and 2021 based on the schedule below.**

- Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and holidays as follows:
  - 2019 –May 24 through September 15
  - 2020 - May 22 through September 13
  - 2021 – May 29 through September 12

The daily schedule will be as follows:

Friday: noon – 10 p.m.

Saturday: 10 a.m. – 10 p.m.

Sunday & holidays: 10 a.m. – 9 p.m.

**The Operator shall submit projected budgets for operating 1-hour, 90-minute and 2-hour tours.**

**Fares:**

TRHPF reserves the right to determine a fare schedule. The Operator shall be responsible for clearly providing a daily account of all ticket and merchandise sales, passengers, cash receipts and credit receipts.

Describe the process and tasks which would be used to collect, record, and accurately account for moneys and passengers. All credit card, cash and online sales will be processed through the TRHPF POS system such as Square or QuickBooks Go Payment.

**Disclaimer:**

All information is provided for informational purposes and does not constitute all or part of a contract. The information is designed to assist the potential Operator in determining whether to proceed with the submission of a proposal. While the information herein is believed to be correct, it is the responsibility of the proposer to perform due diligence. Many of the historical sites listed above have websites and be located on web based search engines as well as at [www.thamesriverheritagepark.org](http://www.thamesriverheritagepark.org). Applicants are encouraged to review the information.

**Thames River Heritage Park Foundation discretion:**

The TRHPF, at its sole discretion, may reject any or all proposals for any reason.

The selected Operator will be required to sign a contract with TRHPF. The Operator shall not be allowed to assign the contract. TRHPF and the Operator shall be the sole and exclusive parties to the contract, and the contract shall in no way be construed as to give rise to a contractual obligation on the part of the United States Government, the State of Connecticut or the Department of the Navy.

**SUBMISSION OF RFP**

Proposals should be submitted as follows:

**If mailed:** Six (6) copies of the proposals must be postmarked no later than Monday, January 28, 2019 and should be sent to Amy Perry, Executive Director, Thames River Heritage Park, PO Box 851, New London, CT 06320. Proposals postmarked after January 28, 2019 will not be considered.

**Electronic submissions** must be sent to [info@thamesriverheritagepark.org](mailto:info@thamesriverheritagepark.org) and must be received no later than 5 p.m., Monday, January 28, 2019. Proposals received after this deadline will not be considered.

All respondents must submit a Letter of Intent on or before Tuesday, January 8, 2019, mailed to the address above or emailed to [info@thamesriverheritagepark.org](mailto:info@thamesriverheritagepark.org) **AND** attend a pre-submittal meeting 11 a.m., Tuesday, January 8, 2019, Fort Trumbull State Park Conference Center, 90 Walbach Street, New London, CT 06320 at which time proposers will have an opportunity to ask questions.

Inquiries or questions regarding this RFP may be emailed to [info@thamesriverheritagepark.org](mailto:info@thamesriverheritagepark.org).

APPENDIX A  
UTILITY BOAT SPECIFICATIONS

S9007-B5-BIM-010

Table 1-1. Leading Characteristics

Item	Data
<b>Performance</b>	
Range .....	120 nautical miles
Capacity (incl. crew).....	75 persons
Displacement (full load) .....	28,800 lbs. max.
Hoisting Weight (Design) .....	17,000 lbs. max.
Draft (full load) .....	3 feet, 6 inches
Crew .....	4 persons
Fuel Capacity .....	112 gallons
<b>Hull Specifications</b>	
Length .....	39 feet, 11 inches
Beam .....	11 feet, 10 inches
Molded Depth .....	5 feet, 4-3/4 inches
Bottom Configuration.....	Semi-V
<b>Engine</b>	
Manufacturer .....	Detroit Diesel
Model .....	1062-7000
Rated Horsepower .....	174 shp
Displacement .....	425 cu. in.
Cylinders .....	6
Fuel .....	Diesel fuel
Marine Gear .....	Allison "M" Gear 1.52:1 Reduction Ratio
<b>Propeller and Shaft</b>	
Type .....	3 blade
Rotation .....	Right-hand
Diameter .....	26 inches
Pitch .....	19 inches
Material .....	Manganese Bronze
Shaft Diameter .....	1-3/4 inches
Stuffing Box .....	Sliding gland type
<b>Electrical power</b>	
System Power .....	24 Vdc
Batteries .....	(2) 12-volt, 100 amp hrs
Alternator .....	24 Vdc, 2-wire, ungrounded