

SC-owned Patriots Point in ‘strong financial position’ as new budget passes

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An aircraft rehabilitation program was among the big projects Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum took on its in most recent fiscal year. File/Staff

Officials at state-owned tourist attraction **Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum** say business is back on track and surpassing pre-pandemic levels.

The organization is “in a strong financial position” as it starts its July 1 fiscal year, according to executive director **Allison Hunt**.



BUSINESS

Patriots Point restoring historic aircraft aboard Yorktown flight deck

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The **Patriots Point Development Authority** unanimously passed its new spending plan last month. It projects nearly \$15 million in revenue and \$14.1 million in expenses through June 30, 2024.

Patriots Point reported “record-breaking income” from ticket and gift shop sales in fiscal 2023 totaling \$9.4 million, or 61 percent of its total income. With the added and projected revenue increases from the **Patriots Annex** real estate development and other sources, lease income is projected to increase by \$1 million in the new budget.

Patriots Point embarked on several large initiatives in the last year, including a restoration campaign for the display planes on the aircraft carrier **Yorktown**’s flight deck and the send-off of the submarine **Clamagore**. Next year, the planning and construction of a new landside building will be a large cost.

The budget also pencils in a spending allowance increase of \$1.2 million, allocated by the state budget office, for a principal payment to service debt tied to the destroyer **Laffey**. The loan is expected to take six years to pay off.

One-time expenditures include \$120,000 to conduct a museum master plan, \$130,000 to redesign the website and \$88,000 for improvements to its leadership and training center.

“It’s important to us to make our website a resource,” said **Chris Hauff**, chief of staff for the development authority who previously was marketing director. “Not just for those looking to visit, but to those doing a research paper or anyone with an interest in the history within our collection.”

Hauff said that the museum is on track to surpass last year’s ticket sales, especially as group bookings and “**Friends of the Fleet**” membership pass sales pick up.

“We are on the way for another record year, but we are also setting ourselves up to prepare for capital expenditures that we know will eventually come our way,” he said.

Tickets for the annual special viewing of this week’s July 4 fireworks aboard the **Yorktown** were a big hit again this year, and quickly sold out. For \$25, ticketholders secured a spot on the flight deck to watch the show Tuesday.

Not now in the Neck

Plans to rezone several upper peninsula properties to allow an accommodations use have run into some resistance.

Charleston's **Planning Commission** is recommending that **City Council** deny the request from the owner of 1745-1709 Meeting Street Road when it meets this month. No details were provided as to what kind of lodging is planned for the four properties, which are now zoned general commercial.

Miami-based **1745 Meeting Street Road LLC** owns the lots. It bought them last year for \$3.35 million.

"In the Neck of the upper peninsula is where we've seen a lot of proposed redevelopment of these old industrial and heavy commercial sites," said **Robert Summerfield**, Charleston's planning director. "As of now, city plans don't call for accommodations use to go that far north."

A peninsula master plan is underway. Summerfield said the city will "keep an open mind" as it re-evaluates the Neck area to see if the current uses and zoning designations are outdated.

"It will very specifically look at the upper peninsula area to try to determine what the needs are and what the next phase of development looks like for that area," he said. "Right now there's no evidence to support that additional accommodations are needed."

The properties are along the railroad tracks and are largely vacant, aside from the **Wonderer** social club.

Summerfield said it will take a year to complete the study and adopt proposed recommendations, at which point the commission can "revisit the appropriateness of rezoning requests like this."

Elsewhere in the area, **The Montford Group** has several lodging projects in the works, all south of Meeting Street Road. The **Moxy**, which opened this year at 547 Meeting St., is now the northernmost hotel on the peninsula.

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