

## **Sitka Maritime Heritage Society**

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### **Sitka Maritime Heritage Society Executive Director Job Description**

#### **Introduction**

The Sitka Maritime Heritage Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit whose mission is to preserve and to educate the public about the maritime heritage of Sitka, Alaska.

#### **Origin of the SMHS:**

The SMHS was founded in 1999 to save the Merlin, a schooner built in the 1880s at Green Bay Wisconsin, that had been sunk by a whale. The SMHS was formed to raise and take ownership of the vessel, to be the centerpiece of a maritime educational program at the Japonski Island Boathouse. The Merlin was eventually donated to a maritime heritage organization in Washington state, and the SMHS was revived with the purpose of focusing on the Japonski Island Boathouse, which was critically endangered at the time. We have had a part time director most of the time between 2012 and 2020, supported from 2013 until 2018 by a sublease for a potential fuel dock.

#### **Historic Rehabilitation of the Japonski Island Boathouse**

Our main project is renovating the Japonski Island Boathouse (1941) as a working maritime heritage center, with a boat haul out and workshop, hands-on exhibits, and an active, year-round program of education and heritage activities.

The Boathouse was built for the Navy in World War II and is part of the Sitka Naval Operating Base and U.S. Army Coastal Defenses National Historic Landmark. We've done quite a bit of research and outreach, educating the public about this Landmark and its significance. The building will also function as an interpretive center for the Landmark, with outdoor signs to tell about WWII in Sitka.

The SMHS spearheaded the transfer of the Boathouse property from the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources to the City and Borough of Sitka, for lease to the SMHS, accomplished in 2005. We have a lease from the City and Borough of Sitka for the property for the purpose of creating a public maritime heritage center. We also got the property rezoned to Waterfront Industrial.

#### **Work to date includes:**

- Haz mat and structural surveys
- Clean-up, and documentation of the contents and construction of the boathouse
- Complete, bid-ready historic preservation construction documents for building and marine ways
- Painting and repairing the interior walls
- Restoring and reinstalling all the doors and windows in the building
- Rewiring much of the building and installing modern lighting
- Building and closing in an addition to the building to house an office and restroom
- Installation of electric heat in the shop wing of the boathouse
- Structural evaluation of the marine railway haul-out
- Rebuilding the building foundation
- New roof
- Rebuilding 90% of the exterior walls

#### **Work currently under way (2023), with a \$50,000 Historic Preservation Fund grant, through the City and Borough of Sitka and Alaska Office of History and Archaeology matched with volunteer hours and in-kind from Spenard Builders Supply:**

- Completing the addition interior, including an accessible restroom
- Repair of remaining exterior walls
- Installation of rebuilt doors on East wing
- Install permanent electrical service
- Construction of decks, ramps and steps

gravel to build up ground level on East side

Remaining:

Infiltration barrier and insulation under building

Furnishing wood shop and office

Installation of the history exhibit in East wing

Landscaping including beach access

Marine Ways cradle, tracks and winch (estimated at \$500,000)

Catwalk and additional restroom at head of marine ways bay

A float and ramp for seasonal storage and launching of kayaks and small boats

**The current focus is on completing the building's rehabilitation for public occupancy, consisting of the work in the current grant now under way.** This will enable use to generate income. This includes grant management.

The long range goal is to have the haul out in full operation, and to have a public float for storage and launch of kayaks. Income from use of the facility itself would come from boat haul-outs and renting the wood shop; lease of some dock space to kayak outfitter; merchandise sales; tours of the building (in addition to the history exhibit, the building will be set up so that visitors can see work being done); possible sublease of space for an espresso stand or the like; rentals (of the museum wing) for events; and through our own classes, workshops and events.

### **Programming**

The mission of the SMHS is to preserve our maritime heritage, and to share that heritage with the public, especially youth. Programming is the heart of our mission and is why we exist. This includes developing programs for visitors, that will benefit visitors but also generate income.

**The current focus for programming is to maintain a level of about an event a month.** This includes free events, classes, and fund raisers, as well as activities for earned income.

SMHS programming includes our annual meeting, in February or March, which is a live oral history panel on a particular topic in local maritime history. These are recorded and posted to our website. These have been well-attended, incredibly informative, and often very funny. Topics have included Trolling for Salmon, Women in the Fisheries, and Stories of Lituya Bay. We also do other oral history interviews, a history fundraising cruise, and "Pub Talks."

We have conducted various classes and workshops, including a toy boat making workshop with kids, workshops on knots, and a collaboration with 4H to build sailing dinghies. We would like to hold a boat building class.

Another project is to work with the City, U.A.S, TrailWorks and other groups to **bring attention to**, and get property owners and the public together to create a plan for, keeping **the historic and recreational values in the Japonski Island shoreline**, ahead of the planned US Coast Guard Fast Response Cutter dock. We also are in the process of applying for the tidelands in front of the building.

We have an exhibit that we developed with the Sitka Tribe of Alaska's Cultural Resources Committee, of Sitka's commercial fishing history, ready for installation in the East wing of the building once that wing has occupancy. This will generate income. We have a small, mostly working collection of maritime artifacts, catalogued in Past Perfect software program. Ultimately we will have interpretation for the Naval Air Station portion of the Landmark, which includes UAS, MEHS, and part of the SEARHC campus.

Long term, we also want to do more collaborative projects, with Fine Arts Camp, the 4-H Club and other youth organizations. The building is part of a National Historic Landmark, and we plan to have the site be a "maritime trailhead" for the other portion of the Landmark, the Causeway. We also want to build relationships and programming with the Sitka Tribe of Alaska, Trail Works, Sitka Sound Science Center, local schools, and the Sitka Historical Society.

### **The Executive Director's job description**

As with any nonprofit, the director's main responsibility is to maintain financial sustainability and ensure stability and growth for the organization as we fulfill our mission.

**The second focus is earned income.** In 2022 we developed a downtown Sitka maritime history walking tour. (Walking tours are the main funding source of the Kodiak Maritime Museum.) The tour has been developed and has a booking website. Left to do is marketing, publicity, and fine tuning, and arranging for volunteers and/or employees to give the tours. We are planning to offer some free tours this spring to get ideas for improvement and to publicize the tour.

**Another potential source of earned income is to sublease** part of the property in front of the boathouse for a drive-through espresso stand.

Also this year we will publish a small book of Sitka history, a 5 ½ by 8 ½ inch staple bound book, produced by a board member and a contractor, which will also generate some income.

**We are also working to sustain funding through individual, foundation, and business giving.** This is most of our income, and entails writing a newsletter and possibly other mailings, maintaining our donor database and thanking donors. We hope to at least maintain and to gradually grow our donor base as we raise our visibility through our work.

### **Other**

**There is also the day-to-day business** of communicating with the public and our members, and grant and other nonprofit paperwork and financial management. We do have a bookkeeper.

Part of the job is **to work with the board to generate ideas for long term goals and strategic planning, and to communicate this vision to the public as a coherent “brand.”**

While we can only offer a 20-hour a week position at this time, we want our Director to use the opportunity to build the position as they build the SMHS. The SMHS has a great project and mission, a building, and lots of room to grow.

The challenge, as this is a one-person shop, with limited hours, is to set priorities and to use board members and volunteers effectively. **Our priorities right now are to oversee completion of the building's renovation for public occupancy, develop earned income** (walking tours, explore sublease to espresso stand), **maintain current levels of programming, and to sustain and (ideally) expand our donor base.**

The Executive Director reports to and works with the SMHS board, which will work with the director to steer overall direction; we want a person who will be a creative part of charting the way forward. The board will assist director with events, construction management, fund raising, strategic planning and communications.

The Executive Director is responsible for day-to-day management and organization and working with the board both to set and to meet annual goals for the organization. The director will represent the face of the SMHS to the public.

The contract is currently to work an average of 20 hours/week and is paid every two weeks. The total annual salary is \$35,000, depending on experience. We don't offer any benefits right now.

### **Duties:**

#### **The Executive Director will:**

(with the board) Develop a strategic plan for the year

Be responsible for financial well-being of the SMHS: develop annual budgets, and bring in funding to include:

membership and annual support from businesses and other funders  
earned income compatible with mission

Administer grants and other funding: account, report, track volunteer hours and in-kind contributions.

Comply with all applicable laws and regulations (with assistance of bookkeeper and tax preparer).

Implement programming similar to past levels

Manage construction project – contractor payments, communications with contractor, architects, engineers, city and government permits. The board can assist with this.

Maintain transparent communications with Board, attend and (with Chair) develop agenda for meetings, presently held via Zoom.

Present the face of the SMHS: reflect core values of authenticity and historical and cultural integrity to community and to local, state and national organizations and the public at large

Maintain member/donor database including mailing and email list

Send thank yous/acknowledgments/receipts (with board)

Publicize SMHS activities and goals and maintain effective communication with the public through media such as:

- Brochure, other publications (with volunteer or contractor assistance as needed)

- Newsletter (with aid of volunteer editor as needed)

- Website (with aid of website contractor if necessary)

- Facebook and other social media

- News media announcements and press releases

- Advertising and posters for events

**Essential qualities, experience, skills: the Director is:**

Enthusiastic about our mission and is interested in history, community and culture

Creative, ambitious to excel in nonprofit leadership, and willing to learn, and to seek out information, skills and education

Experienced managing projects- has good management ability – pays attention to critical details, is well-organized

A leader – can effectively organize members and volunteers to achieve goals

Able to understand and present financial reports

Good with people (has good social skills)

An excellent communicator

Able to work independently

Fluent with basic office computer programs

**The Board**

Current board members are Mike Litman, Joe D'Arienzo, Bruce Gazaway, Rebecca Poulson, Stan Barge, Dan Palof, Dave Turcott.