

For Immediate Release

Contact: Jay Stradal 817-914-8534 (c)
Cristina Harter 203-219-7913 (c)



New building for permanent CG36500 preservation and display would replicate a U.S. Life-Saving Service station on Nauset beach, pictured here c1900.

CHO APPLIES FOR CPA GRANT TO FUND SITE PLANNING FOR PERMANENT CG36500 PRESERVATION BUILDING

The Centers for Culture and History in Orleans (the CHO) has applied for a \$55,000 Community Preservation Act grant to develop professional engineering and architectural plans for a new building to permanently protect and display the famous CG36500 motor lifeboat. The plans are a first step in a 4-year project to construct a replica of the U.S. Life-Saving station in service on Nauset beach from 1873 to c1934. The proposed building would be next to the current CHO site on River Road.

“We are excited to begin this community project for the permanent preservation and year-round display of the CG36500, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places,” said Jay Stradal, CHO board chair. “Every year thousands of people come to Orleans from across the country and abroad to see this national treasure and hear about ‘the greatest small-boat rescue in Coast Guard history.’ Our intent is to keep the CG36500 story alive, and in our town, for generations to come.

“Thanks to the CHO’s highly dedicated volunteer crew, the 76-year-old wooden vessel is fully restored and operational,” Stradal said. “While everyone wishes it could stay in the water forever, that just isn’t practical. Maintenance, fuel and insurance costs are rising, mechanical

replacement parts are scarce, and it is becoming more difficult to find experienced volunteers to pilot the boat. To keep the CG36500 in Orleans, we have to plan for its future out of the water.”

Upon approval of the Orleans Community Preservation Committee and voters in Town Meeting, the CPA money would be available next July. According to the CHO application, much of the funding for the multi-million-dollar project would come from the U.S. Government (40 percent), and state grants and individual donations (20 percent each). Private foundation and CPA grants would make up the rest (10 percent each). Fundraising and grant-writing would begin next year, and construction could start in late 2025 and be completed a year later.

“The CHO has a good track record of managing projects of this size,” said Cris Harter, CHO treasurer and grant-writer. “We successfully completed \$1.2 million in updates to our 1834 Meetinghouse and Hurd Chapel on-schedule and on-budget. Less than half of that amount came from local tax dollars. We know the federal and state grant processes and have already identified programs that fund the preservation of National Register listings.”

The proposed building site is directly behind the CHO’s Hurd Chapel, between an existing parking lot and School Road across from Town Hall. It is a small portion of the 139 Main Street property owned by the Town of Orleans. Initial conversations regarding the necessary land and setbacks are under way, and the project is dependent upon approval of a long-term lease for the site by the Town. Such a lease already exists for part of the Hurd Chapel footprint.

“This site, a wooded area with a steep slope near our other facilities, is ideal for the project,” Stradal said. “Visitors would enter from the parking lot at the second-story level to view the boat from the balcony above, then descend by stairs or lift to the main floor to experience it close-up and see related exhibits. The building will be completely accessible and as eco-friendly as possible,” he added.

On February 18, 1952, during a raging nor’easter, four Coast Guardsmen set out at night on the 36-foot CG36500 to rescue sailors on the tanker *Pendleton* that had broken apart just east of the Cape. Despite all odds, the men crossed a notoriously dangerous shoal, found the *Pendleton* without a compass, and returned with 32 survivors. For their bravery, the CG36500 crew each received the Gold Life-Saving Medal, the Coast Guard’s highest honor. After more than 20 years of service, the CG36500 was retired in 1968. It was neglected and nearly forgotten until the Orleans Historical Society/CHO acquired it in 1981. With the help of many volunteers and the support of grants and individual donations, the boat has been carefully restored and now serves as a floating museum telling the *Pendleton* rescue story, honoring the Coast Guard and recounting the history of lifesaving on the Outer Cape. # # #