

For Immediate Release

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Mystic Seaport Trustees Approve Plans to Sail *Charles W. Morgan* Restoration Project Still Underway; Fundraising the Priority

Mystic, Conn. ~ The Mystic Seaport Board of Trustees voted Saturday and authorized the Museum staff to restore the historic whaling vessel *Charles W. Morgan* to sailing condition and to plan a ceremonial voyage upon completion of the current multi-million dollar restoration project, while moving forward with a fundraising initiative to support these activities.

The vote, which was unanimous, came after Mystic Seaport conducted its own four-month feasibility study into sailing the *Morgan*, a registered National Historic Landmark.

The Museum's trustees had approved a motion at its May meeting authorizing the feasibility study.

"This is a decision we do not take lightly," said Mystic Seaport President Steve White. "Every possible consideration will be given to protecting her and honoring her status as the oldest commercial sailing vessel in the western world. In pure age, only the *USS Constitution*, a military vessel, is older.

"This decision will lift the Museum's spirit, test its resolve and serve as a symbol of greatness for Mystic Seaport," continued White. "All elements of the Museum will now have an even greater significance as we honor and celebrate the coming and going of vessels."

"Under Steve's leadership, the staff was very methodical and cautious in determining the feasibility of the *Morgan* sailing again," said Dick Vietor, chairman of the Museum's Board of Trustees. "The board had legitimate concerns and issues, yet the staff was able to show that – as long as sufficient funding is secured – sailing the *Morgan* and bringing her on this journey is the right thing to do. If not now, when?"

Now that the feasibility study has been completed, White said the biggest challenge isn't construction, it's fundraising.

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The cost of restoration alone is \$6 million, according to White – half of which has been raised. The remaining \$3 million would make the vessel strong enough to return to her home at the Museum’s waterfront.

“Sailing her is not required. Restoring her is,” White said. “We have an obligation to continually restore and preserve not only the vessel, but the stories she tells. Without reaching our first goal, not only can we not sail her, but we will have failed in our overall obligation to her need for perpetual care.”

The additional cost to sail her, he said, would be approximately \$2 million.

Beyond the direct costs, the Museum must also raise endowment to support the programs around her and to provide for her ongoing maintenance.

“One of the greatest results could be that she raises enough on this planned journey so her future is secure,” said White.

The current project timeline calls for the vessel to be launched following the bulk of the restoration work in spring 2012. Following another year of work in the water in order to reinstall her rig, the *Morgan* would begin her 38th voyage in summer 2013.

Before truly beginning the voyage, the *Morgan* would be towed down the Mystic River prior to arriving in New London where she would take on additional ballast. From New London, it’s possible she may sail to Newport, RI, carefully guarded and monitored by a support fleet.

The next part of her journey puts the *Morgan* to her original homeport of New Bedford, MA, where she was built in 1841 and the homeport for the majority of her 37 voyages to all corners of the world.

“The *Morgan* made New Bedford and New England proud,” White said. “And to New Bedford she will return to show America once again what resolve and vision can produce.”

The plan also calls for her to journey through the Cape Cod Canal on to Stellwagen Bank, a national marine sanctuary located off of Provincetown, MA.

The *Morgan* would then return to Mystic Seaport – her home since 1941.

Mystic Seaport is the nation’s leading maritime museum and features a working preservation shipyard, a re-created 19th-century coastal village, exhilarating exhibits and a planetarium. For more information, visit www.mysticseaport.org.