

New Charlestown Marina Attracts Younger Boston Boaters

by Anna Townshend

Riding on a new wave of boating interest in the Boston area, marina owners Ann and Chuck Lagasse bought an ailing facility in Charlestown, Massachusetts. They rebuilt the entire property, ready to open for new boaters May 2015.

The Lagasses have been in the marina business for more than 35 years – starting first in Newburyport, Massachusetts, before moving to the Boston market in 2007, when they bought Boston Yacht Haven and completely rebuilt it into an amenity-rich marina for megayachts.

“I think one thing we’ve learned in the past six years is there’s a huge interest in boating in Boston Harbor,” owner Ann Lagasse said.

Not far from Boston Yacht Haven in Boston’s historic north end sat the struggling Charlestown Marina at the head of Boston Harbor. The former owner, an out-of-state New York resident, had performed little maintenance and left the facility to deteriorate. Many of the docks were sunk; none had power or water. Eventually, the state condemned the facility, and the attorney general and the Department of Environmental Protection forced the owner to sell. Both the former owner and the Boston Redevelop Authority encouraged the Boston Yacht Haven owners to purchase the Charlestown marina, and it became a reality in October 2014.

Phase One

The work needed at the marina was extensive, and nearly everything was replaced, from the gangway landings to the lights to the pumpout system.

“The marina was totally a derelict site,” owner Chuck Lagasse said.

Hardhat divers started by cutting off 140 piling at the mud line. The piling



Ann and Chuck Lagasse purchased Charlestown Marina in October 2014 and began extensive renovations. The first phase of the new marina opens May 2015.



Last year, the marina was in complete disrepair. The facility was condemned by the state, which eventually forced the owner to sell.



The steel and concrete breakwater built by Boston Bridge and Steel arrived at the marina via water, pushed by work boats across the harbor.

were removed, along with 8,000 feet of docks.

Much of the removal was done via water. Charleston Marina purchased a workboat, and dragged the demoed and cut-up docks across the harbor, where an excavator loaded 47 truck loads that went to land fills or recycling facilities.

A huge part of the construction was an enormous, custom-built, steel breakwater structure with concrete ballast, similar to one built at Boston Yacht Haven. At Charlestown Marina, each section of the breakwater is 80 feet by 16 feet, by six feet deep. Each section is ballasted with approximately 300,000 pounds. All the sections link together with a hinge system to form two approximately 600-foot and 400-foot legs, weighing a grand total of approximately 4,000,000 pounds.

The large breakwater must stop tugboat and ship wakes created from industrial traffic in the harbor, protect against storm damage and compensate for water level fluctuations. On average,

the marina sees about nine or ten feet in water level changes. To incorporate resilient practices and plan for global warming climate change, the design of the marina is five feet above the normal design level.

The new breakwater was built by Boston Bridge and Steel. It was launched in two sections from East Boston where it was built. Workboats pushed the structures across the harbor, before driving the new piling to set them in place.

The reduced construction traffic was important to locals. “This is a historic neighborhood and a lot of people live here,” A. Lagasse said.

All the docks were built in Warwick, New York by Sullivan Flotation Systems (now Meeco Sullivan). They arrived in about 40 truck loads; Sullivan delivered the docks, and the marina team did the installation on-site.

The new marina will open with 250 slips in Pier 8 and 9, including about 1,000 feet of breakwater. The 30- to

70-foot slips will be doublewide and single berth. Chris Giroux, dockmaster, said the majority of the marinas in the area only offer double-loaded slips. "Customers prefer a finger pier on both sides," Giroux said.

He was at the facility previous to the new ownership, and his knowledge of the area has been useful during the rebuild. Per the recommendation of Giroux, the marina has a lot of singlewide slips, and a wide variety of slips. The new marina is a complete reconfiguration of the slip layout. Where the slips previously ran parallel to the shore and boats were broad side to the wave action, Giroux said, now they run perpendicular to shore, so the boats take the majority of the wave action head-on.

The marina can also side-tie large yachts more than 60 feet on the breakwater.

Charlestown Marina began its renovation in what would become one of the worst winters in Boston history. The marina had 100 inches of snow, and despite that winter, the owners plan

to prepare for winter boaters with heated water and sewer systems.

Charlestown Marina did not get heavy ice in that part of the harbor, while many facilities in the Boston Harbor experienced extensive ice damage.

New Boating Boston

The majority of the marina's boaters, around 70 percent, will be seasonal, with some transient boaters, including some megayachts already booked for the summer. Another component helping the marina is the underserved market, and the City of Boston is interested in attracting boating activity. "The city is embracing it," A. Lagasse said. "It enhances the city, and Boston is putting a lot of emphasis on the waterfront." She said the city is in the processing of implementing a large water taxi system, similar to the one in Fort Lauderdale, which will allow people to get around the city via the water.

The invigorated boating market has also been helped by the local demographic, which has seen

CHARLESTOWN MARINA: AT A GLANCE

- Phase One: 250 slips, plus 1,000 feet of side-tie dockage
- Phase Two adding 110 slips (grand total 16,000 feet of dockage) – completed 2016
- 900-foot steel and concrete breakwater, by Boston Bridge and Steel
- Sullivan Floatation Systems (now Meeco Sullivan) floating docks, mains and finger piers
- fuel dock, shower and laundry facilities, free Wi-Fi
- Marina Electrical Equipment power pedestals – 30-, 50-, 100- and 200-amp, single and three-phase power
- Floating lifts from Golden Lifts on some slips
- Ravens Marine gangways
- 44,000 square feet of Ipe decking
- Pier 6 Restaurant
- KECO pumpout equipment, free service

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The docks built by Sullivan Flotation Systems (now Meeco Sullivan) arrived by truck from its facility in Warwick, New York.

considerable residential growth in the last decade and a young local demographic – one of the youngest in the country.

“One thing we’ve learned about the New England boater,” A. Lagasse said, “you used to throw in a dock and they were happy; new boaters are sophisticated and they want state-of-the-

art experiences.” Charlestown Marina hopes to raise the bar in Boston Harbor.

The final piece helping the new facility is an underserved market. “We have a lot of excitement with it,” C. Lagasse said. Locally, the federal government has spent considerable money cleaning up areas under the Clean Water Act guidelines and the Deer Island Sewage

Treatment Plant, a centerpiece of the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority \$3.8 billion program to protect Boston Harbor against pollution.

“It’s been interesting to watch the evolution of the city,” C. Lagasse said.

Final Plans

Phase two of the marina renovation will rehabilitate Pier 6, and another 110 slips, scheduled to be ready in 2016. The renovations are similar to phase one with a large breakwater section and new docks. In total, the final facility will have 16,000 feet of dockage space.

Also, part of phase two will be a rehabilitation of the Harborwalk along the waterfront, which connects the three piers. The marina is working with the local community to redesign the public waterfront amenity and hired a landscape architecture firm to complete the waterfront look.

Having been to more than a dozen community meetings on the redesign, A. Lagasse said, “it’s very much a community project.” ⚓



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