

L.A. Port Ordered To Study Gambol's Shipyard Plan

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The fate of an ambitious \$50 million shipyard project proposed by Long Beach-based Gambol Industries for the Port of Los Angeles remains unclear despite a vote last week that ordered port officials to reconsider the rejected plan.

Last week, the Los Angeles City Council backed a motion by Councilmember Janice Hahn, who

heads the council's committee on trade, commerce and tourism and is a strong supporter of the project, to have port commissioners and staff take a second look at the application by Gambol Industries to revitalize at least 25 acres at Berth 240Z by restoring it to a working shipyard, with commercial fishing and film and television production activities.

The plan would generate as many as 1,000 direct jobs and 1,000 indirect

jobs, the company claims.

"Janice Hahn did the best move anybody could make. . . . [She said] do a study, don't lose these assets before they're gone," says John Bridwell, Gambol vice president. "We're not pleased, but we're not displeased; we understand there's a lot of different dynamics and pressures occurring here. [The L.A. City Council] is getting a lot of pressure from the port and also from the general public, and the con-



An aerial view of the Southwest Marine Berth 240Z at the Port of Los Angeles shows the two deep-water slips that Gambol Industries hopes to use as a dry dock to service ships 650 feet and smaller. Gambol has projected that revitalizing the site as a working shipyard with heavy-duty electric cranes could generate 1,000 jobs. The Los Angeles City Council has ordered port officials to study the idea. (Photograph courtesy of Gambol Industries.)

tractors and the container yards, to make sure we don't hold up the channel deepening."

"Gambol doesn't want to stop or hold up the channel deepening. . . . We prefer to slow it down for at least a true evaluation," he adds.

Port spokesman Arly Baker declined to comment on the council ruling.

In rejecting the plan earlier this year, the port claimed allowing development on the pier would disrupt the final three years of an ongoing channel deepening project set to begin in October; the two slips at the site are slated for use as landfill space for an estimated 3 mil-

lion cubic yards of contaminated soil that must be dredged from the harbor.

Project Fights For Life

Gambol says it has identified at least 100 barges that could be serviced by the 650-foot dry dock with two deep-water slips proposed for the site. Those vessels are either too big to be handled by the nearby Al Larson Boat Shop or too small for the mammoth BEA Systems Ship Repair in San Diego, a predominantly Navy repair shop.

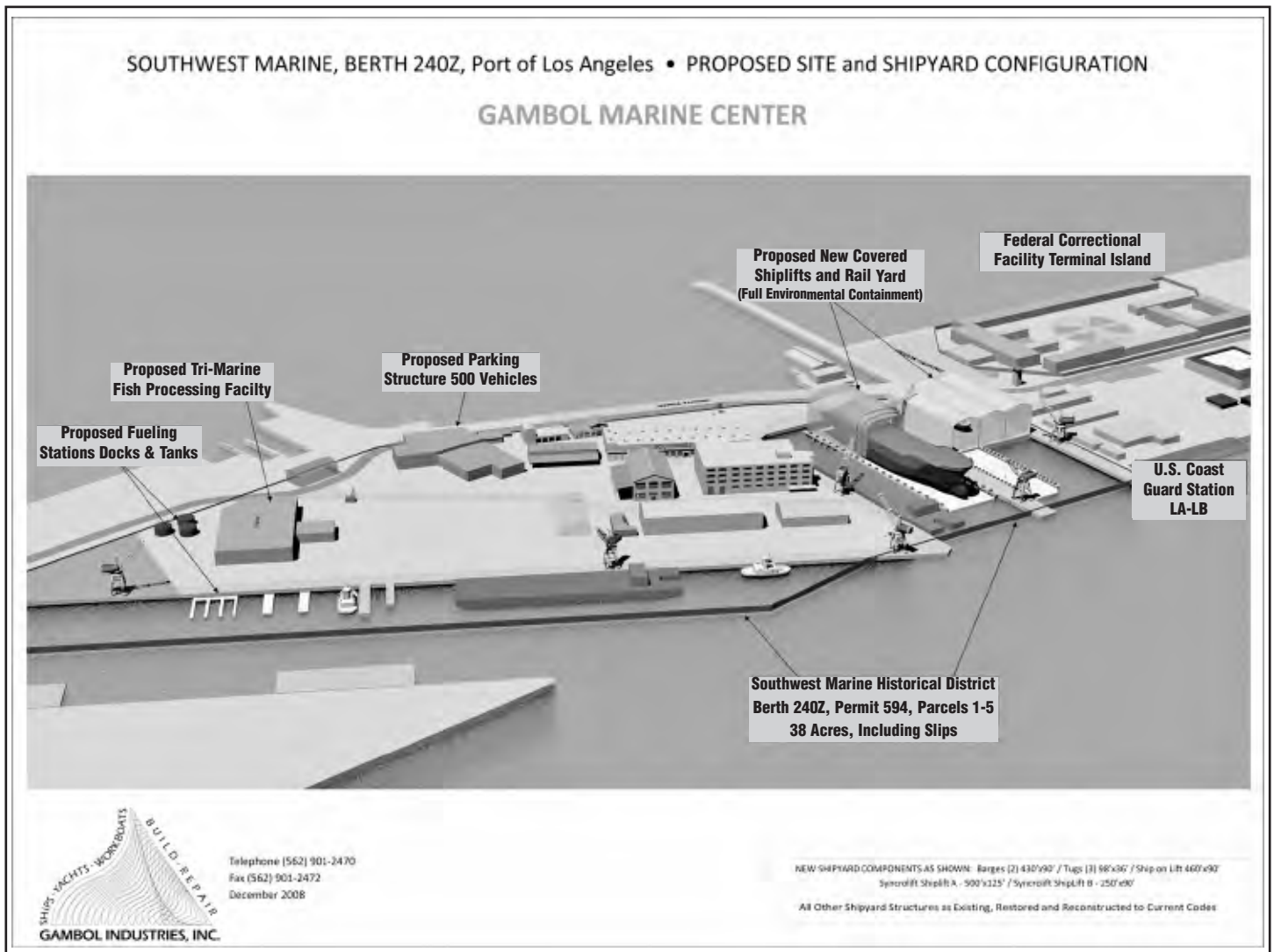
"We're targeting things that are above Larson's and below BAE," Bridwell says. "We're looking at business that's not being satisfied in

California. They have to travel to the Pacific Northwest, or they have to pay to get hauled out at a much larger dry dock.

"We don't have to be the cheapest guy on the block, because we can save them a tremendous amount of time," he adds.

Gambol filed an appeal with the L.A. City Council after the port rejected its application in February, calling it inconsistent with the port's master plan and the California Coastal Act.

Supporters hope the shipyard project will have new life since the council directed the port to clarify that the



The 38-acre Southwest Marine Berth 240Z at the Port of Los Angeles is the proposed site for a revitalized shipyard by Gambol Industries. The \$50 million Gambol Marine Center would include a 650-foot dry dock to be built over a contaminated soil containment site, a fueling station, a fish processing facility and a parking structure in addition to use as a filming location. The site has not been an active shipyard since 2005 and is currently used by the movie industry for filming. (Rendering courtesy of Gambol Industries)

site's land-use designation allows for shipyard use and to "give further consideration to using the site as a disposal location while still preserving the use of the slips."

The Los Angeles Harbor Commission adopted a resolution last week that said any land-use designation for the site must not "preclude future consideration of a shipyard/ship repair facility."

"We commend Councilwoman Hahn's leadership in working with the port to craft a resolution that addressed concerns over any land-use limitations posed by our recently approved Port Master Plan amendment," Jerilyn Lopez Mendoza, acting president for the Los Angeles Harbor Commission, said in a written statement. "With her support, we look forward to proceeding with the channel deepening project this fall, as the initiative and the other projects it impacts will provide thousands of construction jobs over the next few years."

Any permanent use of the former shipyard will be determined through a future public planning, entitlement and environmental process, according to the port.

The Terminal Island site was used by Bethlehem Steel through World War II and was later acquired by Southwest Marine in 1981. After business dropped, the company left the port for good in 2005 and the land was turned over to the Los Angeles Harbor Department (LAHD).

Since then, Gambol secured the contract to serve as a combination caretaker/film coordinator, providing security and promoting the site for use by the movie industry for the last three years.

They've logged approximately 64,000 man days of filming, Bridwell says.

That contract ended in April, and the port is currently requesting proposals for a new caretaker. Given the rocky relationship between the port and Gambol, the company does not expect to win a new contract.

Bridwell says the company is determined to persevere and will work with the port to reach a compromise accommodating several uses at the site. He says all the parties can be satisfied if the port makes concessions, such as modifying the containment structure planned for the two slips and using more offshore dumping sites.

"They're saying we've got to give up some of our slips," he says. "And we're willing to do that; we want to be supportive of every one of these [project] components. We're not here to fight the port; we're trying to be a [good] neighbor." ■