

## MOVE Yacht Club gets ready to leave Steel Pointe site

Keila Torres, Staff Writer    December 8, 2010



*M.O.V.E. Yacht Club treasurer Franklin Hickman, left and Commodore Angelo Pierce, a Bridgeport Police Sergeant, are preparing for the club to move from its current location on Steel Point to Waterview Avenue in Bridgeport.*

BRIDGEPORT -- Nearly a year after the Pequonnock Yacht Club set sail up the harbor to New Haven, members of the MOVE Yacht Club are preparing for their own voyage.

Unlike their former neighbors, however, the largely African American MOVE membership -- the name stands for Men Of Vision and Excellence -- doesn't have far to travel. Next year, construction will begin on a new clubhouse on an approximately 2.4-acre city-owned property on Waterview Avenue, just blocks away from their current location on Steel Point.

The East Side property is separated from Steel Point by Interstate-95 and is located near several other small marinas, as well as a boat repair shop. Further down the street is the Barnum/Waltersville school complex.

"The new site is the one unfinished, unsightly piece in the neighborhood," said the city's economic development director Donald Eversley, of the Waterview property, which he called Steel Point's "little brother."

"We are turning a mess into something that is positive and generating revenues."

MOVE has until the end of February to vacate the Steel Point site, but may obtain an extension of up to 60 days. "The peninsula will then be absolutely prime for new development," Eversley noted.

Under the 40-year lease proposed for MOVE's new site at 148-220 Waterview Ave., along the Yellow Mill Channel, the club will pay \$6,000 a year until 2023. That annual sum will increase to \$24,000 until 2028 and then to \$36,000 for the remainder of the lease. The city could extend the lease up to 10 additional years if MOVE were to obtain a construction or leasehold mortgage prior to Dec. 31, 2012 that runs longer than 40 years.

After this time, rent will be determined in 10-year intervals and will be based on the property's fair market value. Although the city will retain ownership of the property, MOVE will own the buildings.

The only minority yacht club in the area since its inception in 1972, MOVE has about 25 members of black and Hispanic race. The new clubhouse will be twice the size of MOVE's present building.

Commodore Angelo Pierce said the members are excited about the chance to stay in Bridgeport. "We've got a lot of black history and we would like to maintain it and keep it for minority yacht clubs," said Pierce, a sergeant in the city's Police Department. "What we're looking forward to is getting our organization up and running a lot larger and people knowing we are there."

As part of the departure agreement, the city will provide \$375,000 to prepare the site for construction, in addition to financing the remediation of petroleum and PCBs recently discovered on the property.

The City Council is expected to vote on the lease by January, as well as an agreement that would phase in the tax assessment for the Waterview Avenue property -- from an initial \$30 per square foot to \$55 per square foot -- over a period of five years not to extend beyond October 2015. "We will be proud to look at and live in for a long time."