

Kalakala Quietly Changes Hands; Fate Still Uncertain

Monday, 20 May 2013

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/130520.kalakala_update.mp3{/audio}

Jay Barrett KMXT

The iconic Washington State Ferry that spent 20 years as a seafood processor in Kodiak's Gibson Cove changed hands quietly late last year. Karl Anderson, a Tacoma business man didn't buy the Kalakala necessarily to be the next person to try and restore it to its former Art Deco glory. Instead, he acquired it in exchange for delinquent moorage fees.

Former owner Steve Rodrigues, who reportedly went broke and sold his home in an effort to get the Kalakala restored, was not present at a foreclosure hearing in November where Anderson was given possession in exchange for \$4,000 in back rent.

The aging ship was declared a hazard to navigation by the Coast Guard just over a year ago, as the agency is concerned it will come loose of its moorings and sink in the channel, according to Regina Caffree, a Coast Guard spokeswoman:

"If the Kalakala sinks it would block the entirety of the waterway," she said. "And it could impact up to \$23-million worth of commerce in one month."

Caffree spoke with NPR's Martin Kaste, who also spoke with former owner Steve Rodrigues, who admitted defeat in his decade-long battle to save the ship:

"Nothing exists like the Kalakala in the world. It is Art Deco. There is nothing that ever followed that anything ever looked like it again," he said. "We have kept her afloat, we have worked with the government and made proposals for waterfront moorage for the Kalakala and preserving it to its glory and sharing it with the community, but, it failed."

The Tacoma News-Tribune reported that Rodrigues was in a quandary with the Kalakala because environmental regulators wouldn't let him do repair work on the water, and the Coast Guard declared the vessel too fragile to move. Even had he been able to move it, there was no place to take it.

Anderson says his first choice would be to have the Kalakala restored, but he's not going to just turn it over to anyone.