

Historic Cutter Storis on Auction Block

Monday, 17 June 2013

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The U.S. Coast Guard cutter Storis, now decommissioned, is being auctioned by the U.S. General Services Agency. U.S. Coast Guard file photo

Jay Barrett/KMXT

The historic Coast Guard Cutter Storis, which spent most of its post-World War II career sailing Alaska waters, is on the auction block. Alaska's Congressional delegation had managed to stave off disposal since its 2007 decommissioning, but the federal government has decided it is time to move on.

Heather Handyside is a press secretary for Senator Mark Begich.

"Well I think we had been hoping to be able preserve the Storis, and find it a place specifically in the museum in Juneau," she said. "However, as you probably know, it does take a little bit of money to maintain these older, historical vessels, and so, unfortunately we weren't able to keep it and it's being auctioned off."

The Storis was listed last week on the auction site of the General Services Administration. The opening bid, which did not meet the reserve price, was \$60,000.

Joe Geldhof, the secretary for the Storis Museum in Juneau, said it appeared the GSA was not willing to wait any longer for Congress to give the ship away:

"Well, a number of us around the country and throughout Alaska were surprised with the General Services Administration's acts in putting it up for auction," he said. "We were on a track for the Congress to dispose of the Storis by giving it to the museum. And we were frustrated, as many people are, in dealing with Congress by various maneuvering and stuff. But this caught a lot of people by surprise, the GSA play."

Geldhof said the Storis Museum group was hoping to bring the ship back to Juneau, where it was stationed in the 1940s and '50s, and use it for training young mariners as well as a museum.

"What we had hoped when we heard about this not too long ago is that we'd be able to obtain the vessel for training purposes through the Sea Cadets program run by the Navy League of the United States. And the GSA wasn't willing to work with us and they just wanted to put it out to bid. You know, there's conflicting views apparently in the GSA, whether it's in

California or Atlanta, where this seems to be run from," he said. "But if I sound confused it's because all of us are, a little bit."

Geldhof says the next move will hopefully save the Storis from the scrap-yard, but it might mean the ship won't be retired to Alaska.

"Our plan at this point is to work with some folks in Ohio and out in the Midwest, to acquire the Storis. That means it may wind up in Toledo where the ship was built, but we are still trying to save the Storis and preserve a ship that spent most of its career in Alaska, but started out in Ohio. Frankly, we are scrambling at this point to preserve a ship that was enormously important to Alaska's maritime history and to the maritime history of the United States."

The Storis spent about 10 years stationed in Juneau and another 50 in Kodiak. It spent much of its time patrolling the North Pacific and Bering Sea.