

## 2 ferry firms want contract

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Two firms are vying for the right to operate a ferry service between the Peninsula at Bayonne Harbor and Lower Manhattan.

SeaStreak America Inc., a division of Sea Containers Ltd.; and Lighthouse Fast Ferry, Inc., have submitted conceptual operating proposals to the Bayonne Local Redevelopment Authority, whose commissioners are expected to discuss them tonight.

But they'll likely need more time to review them before awarding a contract, according to BLRA Executive Director Nicholas A. Chiaravalloti. The BLRA had asked for ferry service proposals in March and received these two on June 3.

Chiaravalloti said the two prospective operators "are extremely well-known entities with proven track records. The BLRA intends to hold intense discussions in order to negotiate an agreement within the next month."

Once the authority designates an operator to run the service, Chiaravalloti said that the BLRA can apply to the Federal Emergency Management Agency for aid to rebuild portions of a bulkhead on the Peninsula's south side which, according to Chiaravalloti, has undergone "significant deterioration" during the past 15 years.

The restoration work - which Chiaravalloti estimated would take four months to complete - is crucial to having a successful ferry operation, he said.

"Working with the ferry operator, as well as the state and federal governments, we hope to be able to build a ferry terminal and be in operation before the end of the year," Chiaravalloti said.

SeaStreak America says in its proposal to the BLRA that it would run two 149-passenger mono-hull crew boats - the SeaStreak Brooklyn and a second chartered vessel - from the Peninsula to Pier 11/Wall Street in Manhattan during weekday peak commuter rush hours.

"Based on a service speed of 23 knots, the trip is anticipated to take 15 to 20 minutes and will leave the Peninsula every half-hour, from 6 to 10 a.m., and from Pier 11, from 4 to 8 p.m.," the proposal says.

"Shuttle service from East 34th Street (in Manhattan) to Pier 11 will be provided by other SeaStreak vessels to accommodate the Midtown passengers. If the market exists, weekend service may be added."

SeaStreak anticipates needing parking to accommodate at least 1,200 vehicles.

SeaStreak currently offers daily ferry service from Atlantic Highlands, Highlands and South Amboy to Wall Street and the 34th Street Pier on Manhattan's East Side.

The company's SeaStreak Brooklyn vessel provides private sightseeing, special event and charter service. Its parent company, Sea Containers Ltd., operates passenger ferry service in New York, the English Channel, the Irish Sea, the Baltic and the Adriatic. Sea Containers also runs marine container leasing operations and leisure-based operations.

The other proposal comes from Lighthouse Fast Ferry, whose vice president, Anthony T. Colasanti, received his undergraduate degree from Saint Peter's College, Jersey City. Lighthouse Fast Ferry currently operates a daily commuter ferry service from Highlands and Keyport to Manhattan and offers charters in the tri-state region.

Lighthouse Fast Ferry proposes to run a ferry service between the Peninsula and Lower Manhattan, using 150-passenger vessels "equipped with air-conditioning, airline style seats, bar and snacks, outdoor viewing, TVs and tables and space to stow carry-on items."

Initially, Lighthouse says, it would provide weekday service, with "one vessel departing Bayonne every half-hour," from 6 to 9 a.m., "and a similar headway" from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. for the return trip.

"During the off-peak midday periods the ferry will depart Bayonne every hour (and) the final PM trip will depart Manhattan at 7:30 p.m."

Lighthouse says it would provide Saturday service hourly between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. The company offers to provide discounted fares for Bayonne senior citizens and children under 12 for off-peak and Saturday trips.