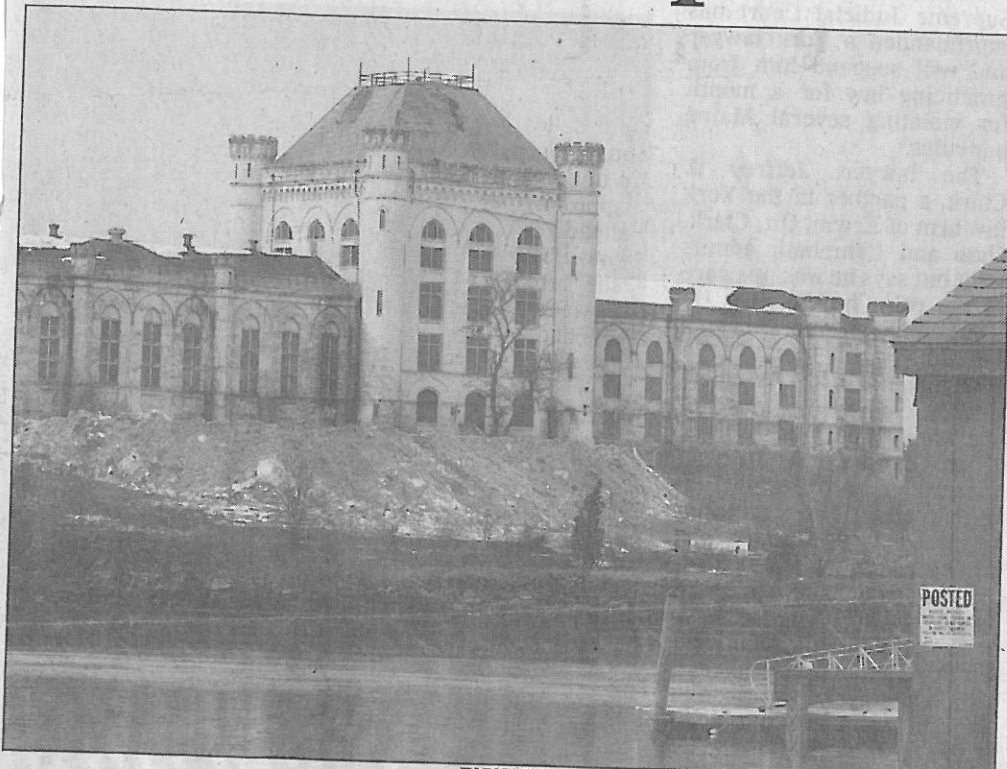


YORK COUNTY

Navy seeks lessee for shipyard prison



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The Navy is expected to put out requests for the reuse of the defunct 100-year-old, 260,000-square-foot Navy prison, which closed in 1974.

Developer wanted for 260,000 square feet

BY DAVID RAMSAY
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KITTERY, Maine — The U.S. Navy is looking for a developer to lease its 100-year-old former prison located at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, and will hold a forum for potential tenants and interested municipal officials in April. "The vision of this opportunity was that the property was to be leased to a financially viable company whose operations would be compatible with the primary mission of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard," said Cmdr. David Kelly, deputy commander for base operations support.

Kelly said that there were a broad range of factors the Navy would take into consideration when choosing the ideal tenant.

"First is security. The use has to be compatible with the mission of the shipyard," he said. "The second is that we remain good neighbors — the noise factor — we don't want anything that would bother our neighbors."

Beyond that, he said, "we don't have any specific use in mind."

The reuse proposal was initiated by the Naval Facilities Engineering Command in Washington, D.C., several months ago, said Kelly.

NAVFAC looks for unused or underutilized — but not excess — properties of the Navy around the world and

works with the commanders of the local bases on which the properties are located.

Built in 1908 as a prison for Navy and Marine personnel, the building was "the largest poured concrete structure in the world at that time," Kelly said.

The building was enlarged in 1942 and 1943 during World War II until it reached the present size of 260,000 square feet. He said the building itself was in very good shape structurally but would need to be evaluated in terms of roofing, piping, heating and other systems.

"By the time it was closed in 1974, over 82,000 people went through its doors," Kelly said.

Kelly said he anticipated the process of finding the right tenant to be "competitive" and include a number of factors. The yard is currently off limits to nonshipyard workers, for instance. Access through the base security gates, Kelly said "will be coordinated during final lease negotiations."

Both Portsmouth and Kittery municipal officials have been told about the Navy's plans. The forum for interested parties will take place from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on April 16 at the New England Center in Durham.

"We will be sending out invitations to prospective developers about the forum," Kelly said.

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Cmdr. David Kelly
Deputy commander
Portsmouth Naval Shipyard

Deputy City Manager Cindy Hayden said the Navy had held a briefing with them and Kittery, but that she was waiting for a request for proposals to be issued.

"We really don't know what kind of uses the shipyard is looking for, probably some type of economic development ... it's a federal process."

This isn't the first time the Navy has sought a private tenant for the prison.

In 1999, a computer company called GreenPages was among eight private companies that sent proposals to Washington and toured the grounds to look at the prison. There were negotiations between the companies and the Navy but nothing resulted from them.