

## City Neighborhoods

### Work to start next month at Point State Park

#### \$7.1 million project includes filling in of Music Bastion

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By Patricia Lowry, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Work is scheduled to begin next month on improvements and alterations to Point State Park, including the controversial burial of Fort Pitt's Music Bastion.

The Pennsylvania Department of General Services announced yesterday that \$7.1 million in state contracts has been awarded to three firms for general contracting, plumbing and electrical work.

"After five years of discussion with the community, as well as review and planning, we are ready to move forward with providing some much-needed improvements to the park's outdated infrastructure, delivering a better interpretation of its history and continuing recreational and cultural opportunities," Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Michael DiBerardinis said in a statement.

The work will include new irrigation, drainage and electrical systems; new terrazzo paths with bluestone edging; new landscaping, benches and lighting; vendor hookups; construction of a stage pad across from the Pittsburgh Hilton hotel; renovations to the reflecting pool and its mechanical systems; new trail signs and wireless Internet access.

One of the biggest jobs will be filling in the 8-foot-deep trench surrounding the park's reconstructed Music Bastion, which simulates the original walls of Fort Pitt. Filling in the trench around the Music Bastion would allow the city side of the park to become an active space for informal games like Frisbee and soccer, as well as scheduled events like concerts.

The Music Bastion is thought to be where the fort's buglers played. Once the trench is filled in, the Music Bastion's shape will be outlined in granite.

Another dramatic change will be the removal of six mature pin oaks along Commonwealth Place across from the Hilton hotel. They will be taken out to accommodate a new elliptical driveway that will allow school buses to safely deposit children visiting the park's Fort Pitt Museum.

Seven red oak trees, each one 7 inches in diameter, will be planted in an arc along the sidewalk.

Contracts were awarded to S.E.T. Inc. of Lowellville, Ohio (\$4.49 million for general contract work); Lone Pine Construction of Bentleyville (\$137,750 for plumbing work); and Power Contracting Co. of Carnegie (\$2.5 million for electrical work). The work is expected to be completed by the end of 2007.

The state originally earmarked \$4.3 million for the project, but increased its allocation when the first round of bids came in substantially higher than the \$7.1 million eventually awarded, said DCNR spokeswoman Christina Novak.

Those leading the effort to save the Music Bastion were surprised to hear that contracts had been awarded when contacted by a reporter.

"This is the latest episode in the chronic mismanagement of the park," said the group's lawyer, historic preservation consultant Michael Nixon, adding that it is weighing its options and consulting its partners.

At issue is whether the bastion is a restoration of an 18th-century historic site or a non-historic, mid-20th-century reconstruction, a product of Renaissance I.

"I'm surprised that the contracts have been awarded because Barbara Franco is supposed to meet with us in a couple of weeks," said Wilfred T. Rouleau, professor emeritus of mechanical engineering at Carnegie Mellon University and vice president of the Edgewood Historical Society.

Ms. Franco, director of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, agreed to meet with Mr. Rouleau and other bastion preservationists next month at the Fort Pitt Museum, so they could walk the site together.

"I understood it to be an opportunity for them and us to present information and views that have the potential to lead to some sort of consensus eventually," said archaeologist Richard Lang, who worked on the excavation of the bastion in the 1960s. "I assumed that

meeting would be taking place prior to the letting of any relevant contracts. Our not being told about it beforehand was inappropriate."

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission spokeswoman Jane Crawford said Ms. Franco was traveling and couldn't be reached for comment.

Late last month, Mr. Lang, Mr. Rouleau and Mr. Nixon co-authored an opinion piece in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and simultaneously launched a Web site, [www.savefortpitt.org](http://www.savefortpitt.org), devoted to saving the bastion. In less than three weeks, an online petition has collected more than 330 signatures, many with comments.

"I am an archaeologist and find it ludicrous that anyone would intentionally bury an historic site so important to the history of the commonwealth," wrote Patricia Miller of Huntingdon, Pa., "On a practical level, historic tourism is increasingly important and contributes to the sense of place and history that visitors to the park feel. Please abandon this senseless plan."

"The condition of what remains of the bastion is a sin," wrote John R. Fowler of Pittsburgh. "It reflects poorly on those charged with the upkeep of the park. Even so, burying those mistakes is no way to correct them. Men fought and died for this place that controlled the access to the frontier; it is up to us to preserve that memory in a fitting manner."

"The reaction has been overwhelming in favor of preserving the bastion," Mr. Lang said. "We've been extremely encouraged by it."

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