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**RESOLUTION URGING MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
TO SPEND AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT FUNDS ON  
STABILIZATION OF BELLE ISLE BOATHOUSE**

**BY COUNCIL MEMBER JAMES TATE**

- WHEREAS,** The mission of the Detroit City Council is to promote the economic, cultural and physical welfare of Detroit's citizens and residents through Charter-mandated legislative functions including but not limited to this Honorable Body speaking by and through its resolutions to urge action be taken on behalf of its citizens; and
- WHEREAS,** The recent announcement of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) expressing its desire to spend \$2 Million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to demolish the historic Detroit Boathouse on Belle Isle; and
- WHEREAS,** The Belle Isle Boathouse, built in 1902 in a distinctive Mediterranean-style, is in a rare category of the nation's oldest existing and continuously used boathouses, which includes Philadelphia's Boathouse Row. This iconic building, owned by the City of Detroit and under the oversight of the State of Michigan through its long-term lease agreement of Belle Isle, equally deserves financial investment with other MDNR investment projects on the island; and
- WHEREAS,** The building should be regarded as both an important historic and educational resource for Detroit citizens and visitors alike, as it has been utilized for providing to hundreds of students rowing educational programs; is one of the safest sites on the island from which to access the Detroit River for those engaging in rowing, kayaking, canoeing, paddle boarding; and could continue to be a critical asset to the MDNR as a place on the island for visitor, educational and recreational programs and services; and
- WHEREAS,** The future of the building's tenants and primary historic function may need to change in order to develop a viable rehabilitation and reuse plan, it is critical that funding be prioritized to stabilize, and if necessary, mothball the building to allow for a thorough planning process in which the public and city officials can participate; and
- WHEREAS,** MDNR's December, 2023 posted month-long public comment webpage for ideas regarding the future of the boathouse was well intentioned, its timeline was not realistic for what needs to be an engaging and thorough consultation between city and state officials, the private and non-profit sectors, and citizens to evaluate all possible reinvestment and reuse opportunities and potential partnerships that may be necessary to enable the boathouse to be rehabilitated and function economically. This may include an exploration of not only all potential public funding sources, but federal and state historic tax credits if an income-producing use for the building was identified as viable; and
- WHEREAS,** MDNR's summary of past condition assessments and projected costs to address the building's needs had a stated price tag of \$43 Million, this was misleading as it is a "restoration" cost – a higher number than would be necessary to make

critical building repairs so that the building could be functional by code. Comparing this number to a \$2 Million demolition cost presents a false narrative and may in fact be a low number as no citation for the demolition estimate has been provided; and

**WHEREAS,** In addition to these estimates, included on the DNR's page seeking public comment, is a September 2022 "Phase 1 and Phase 2 Exterior Structural Conditions and Cost Assessment" report for the boathouse by MacMillan Associates and WTA Architects. This report provides phases and estimates that should be further evaluated as additional options for the building. They include:

- Cost to stabilize and mothball: \$3,596,901 (PDF Pages 42-43)
- Cost to stabilize building with restricted occupancy within the building: \$3,821,567 (PDF Pages 45-46) *For restricted occupancy, the diagrams on PDF pages 47-49 show three small rooms on the boathouse's 1st floor as well as the porch above that would need to be restricted, while the majority of the building could be usable.*
- Cost to rehabilitate entire building enclosure: \$16,181,747 (PDF Page 54).

A third option of a phased plan for the building that considers mothballing, stabilization and phased rehabilitation should have been presented to the public with the \$2 Million demolition and \$43 Million restoration options; and

**WHEREAS,** Additionally, it is undetermined if Section 106 review may be triggered by permits potentially necessary through the Army Corps of Engineers (ACE). This should be verified by MDNR with ACE representatives and relayed to Detroit City Council, Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board (HDAB), and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) by the MDNR and ACE; **BE IT THEREFORE**

**RESOLVED,** The urgency of addressing the future of the boathouse is critical, especially as it pertains to the use of ARPA funds that the MDNR must obligate in the near term. It is the opinion of the Detroit City Council, that the boathouse is an extremely important and irreplaceable building that is one of the island's most visible and historic structures, which should be prioritized for stabilization with ARPA funds until a long-term use and rehabilitation plan is developed; and that MDNR should prioritize demolition over stabilization. The Detroit City Council urges the MDNR to address the most critical stabilization needs and to pursue a thorough and engaging public planning process to develop a reuse and rehabilitation solution to ensure the preservation of the Belle Isle Boathouse for generations to come. **BE IT FINALLY**

**RESOLVED,** That a copy of this resolution be provided to Mayor Mike Duggan, Governor Gretchen Whitmer, the Speaker of the Michigan House of Representatives, Joe Tate, the Director of the MDNR, Scott Bowen, the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, Ryan Schumaker, Government Consulting Services, Inc.