

# “Open to Everyone”: Brayton Point Company Says it’s Prepared for Busy Port



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The Brayton Point Power Station in Somerset, Mass., is shown in this Wednesday, Oct. 23, 1996 file photo. [AP FILE PHOTO]

By Peter Jasinski / The Herald News (Fall River, Mass.)

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SOMERSET — Town officials and representatives of the company that just signed a new port lease agreement for Brayton Point are unable to estimate how many ships may soon regularly visit the site, but both groups says the increase in traffic won’t have a negative impact on Mount Hope Bay.

Last week marked the announcement of the new lease agreement between Commercial Development Corporation, which owns the site of the former Brayton Point Power Station, and Patriot Stevedoring + Logistics, the company tasked with operating the planned new port.

Though the power station had regularly hosted coal-delivering ships when the plant was still operational, CDC and Patriot have said the new lease agreement will see comparatively higher activity.

“It’s too early to ballpark how many ships we’ll see. With that said, there is a tremendous amount of interest in the site from various shippers and receivers,” said Neil McLaughlin, vice president of Patriot.

As of Thursday, only the Wakefield-based company Anbaric had signed on as a new tenant for the new Brayton Point Commerce Center. That company is expected to convert an average 1,200 megawatts of electricity from offshore wind turbines. CDC is working to attract additional tenants to the site.

“For anyone who has a viable shipping business or receiving business, we’re very interested in talking to them. The port is open to everyone,” said McLaughlin. “I think one of the overarching goals is to attract manufacturing interests that want a deepwater port, but it’s not exclusive to just manufacturing.”

McLaughlin estimated that as much as 150 acres of the property could be used as lay-down space for cargo that would likely be associated with machine components used in offshore wind farms.

Somerset Harbormaster Robert Ganem said he views the port lease agreement as positive news for the town, citing the possible influx of tax dollars new businesses could bring.

As far as how the port might affect ship traffic, Ganem said he expects it to increase, but not to levels with which the bay is unfamiliar.

“I don’t think it will be an issue with ships because coal barges had been coming in there for so many years. I think we will see a lot more of the larger ships than before, but they have to work around the tides and would only be in at high tide,” Ganem said, referring to the future port as an “asset” for Somerset.

Ganem went on to note how ship traffic in the bay has decreased in recent years.

“It’s really toned down,” he said. “Years ago, when Montaup and Shell were open and New England Power, you had tankers coming in almost daily. We don’t see any of that anymore.”

Current harbor operations, Ganem explained, are largely a collaboration between his office and the office of the harbormaster in Fall River. Because of the expected increase in activity, he said more resources will likely be needed to ensure waterway activities continue to run effectively.

McLaughlin said he expects the port should be operational in some capacity by the end of the year and that only minimal maintenance work needs to be done before that can happen.

“As part of our due diligence, we conducted bathymetric studies (to measure the port’s water depth),” he said. “The channel is in excellent condition. Right now, there is no dredging required.”