

City of Portland launched from A.F. Theriault and Son shipyard

By John DeMings
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Wide experience in shipbuilding and 'family feelings' helped A.F. Theriault and Son win a contract to build a 65-foot fireboat for Portland, Me.

The vessel, named 'City of Portland', was launched in a ceremony Thursday at the Meteghan River shipyard.

Capt. David Pendleton, who will skipper the fireboat when it arrives at Portland, said there was an immediate rapport between fire department officials and shipyard staff.

Pendleton said the city received three bids to build the boat. One, from a New England yard, was rejected as too expensive, leaving bids from Theriault's and from an Alabama company that builds just oil supply vessels.

In contrast, the Theriault yard builds a variety of vessels, even yachts, and had the expertise required.

"When we came here, I knew immediately we had the right one. It was just like family."

Despite the yard's experience in building a variety of boats, company vice-president Arthur Theriault was enthusiastic Thursday about this latest project. "It's not every day we build a fireboat. It was gratifying to build a vessel such as this for the city of Portland."

Theriault pointed to the historic and geographic connections of the Maritimes and Maine.



Portland firefighter Dick Wurtel was among department staff who helped design mechanical sections of the new fireboat 'City of Portland'. John DeMings photos

Portland city councillor Nick Mavodones Jr., thanked Portland firefighters who have worked for several years to see the project completed, and added that he had been impressed from the beginning by the Theriault shipyard.

The new vessel, which was christened by Valerie Pendleton, daughter of the vessel's captain, replaces a steel-hulled vessel built 50 years ago.

While planning in Portland began 20 years ago, it was just 20 months ago that work began in earnest with awarding of

the tender to A.F. Theriault and Son.

Based on a 55-foot design by a Vancouver marine architect, and lengthened 10 feet to meet Portland's needs, the aluminum-hulled 'City of Portland' is an all-

weather emergency vessel to serve the city of Portland as well as surrounding communities on Penobscot Bay.

Capt. Pendleton said the fireboat is equipped as a sea-going ambulance with a full medical bay that duplicates emergency services ambulances used in Portland.

The design will allow emergency medical technicians to board the vessel and provide the same level of care to patients as they could in a land-based ambulance.

Firefighting equipment includes both remote- and manually-controlled water cannons using 3,000-gallon per minute pumps, as well as firefighting foam capability.

Recent availability of commercial air service between Portland and Yarmouth by Starlink Aviation also became a plus during construction.

Fire department and city officials were able to reach the Meteghan River shipyard with a few hours. As well, Starlink officials ensured last minute seating for fire department staff making rush visits, and ferried parcels to Yarmouth for pickup by the shipyard.



Valerie Pendleton, daughter of the new ship's captain, smashes a bottle of champagne to christen the fireboat 'City of Portland'. Watching are project manager Michael Mason and Capt. David Pendleton.