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INDEPENDENCE SEAPORT MUSEUM ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO ITS BOARD OF PORT WARDENS

PHOTOS: [HERE](#)

Philadelphia, PA | January 24, 2023 – [Independence Seaport Museum](#) (ISM) has announced new changes to the [Board of Port Wardens](#), the institution's primary governing body responsible for the stewardship of its archive and artifact collections. Those who serve on the Board set both fiduciary and institutional policies to ensure ISM can fulfill its ongoing mission to preserve its historic ships, Cruiser *Olympia* and Submarine *Becuna*, and one of the largest maritime artifact collections in North America.

Together, the members elected former Vice-Chair Peter Ernst as its new Chair of the Board, succeeding ISM's longtime Chair Peter Havens, who stepped down to assume the role of Chair Emeritus. As President and CEO of ISM, Peter S. Seibert will continue to implement the Board's policies and direct and manage ISM's activities.

"ISM was founded in 1960 by J. Welles Henderson, and since then we have had an unprecedented history of exceptional Board leadership," said Seibert. "Our outgoing Chairman Peter Havens has served the Museum with both real passion and incredible dedication for the last decade. We are now pleased to welcome Peter Ernst to the role, who shares the same enthusiasm for ISM and whose ideas will help us chart a new future for this landmark institution."

In addition to his new role of Chairman, Ernst serves as the Executive Director at McCausland Foundation. Prior to joining the McCausland Foundation in 2013, he held a wide range of functional roles, including sales, customer service, human resources, operations, and logistics in the business-to-business services. Ernst currently serves on the boards of ISM and Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School.

"ISM is thankful for the leadership provided by Peter Havens during his tenure as Chair of the Board," said Ernst. "We look forward to building on the insights and energy of current team members and Port Wardens to engage visitors as they discover Philadelphia's river of history and world of connections."

In addition to electing Ernst, ISM's Board of Port Wardens elected members to new positions, including Vice-Chair Courtney Disston. Founder of Disston Search, an executive search firm focused on senior-level leaders for non-profit and mission-based organizations, Disston founded the company after 20 years with large national firms in the Non-profit and Social Impact practices. After 20 years with large national firms in the non-profit and social impact practices, Disston founded Disston Search, an executive search firm focused on senior-level leaders for non-profit and mission-based organizations.

Disston is joined by fellow Vice-Chair Thomas G. Ashton, who is a Principal at Northstar Equity, LLC, a closely held real estate firm engaged in the development, ownership, and operation of real estate around the country. Before being elected to Vice-Chair, Ashton served as Treasurer of the Board of Port Wardens from November 2021 to January 2022.

For Secretary, the Board named James T. Giles, a former chief judge of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania (EDPA) who served on the bench for almost 29 years. He is now a Senior Counsel of Business Litigation at Blank Rome, LLP, and primarily focuses on alternative dispute resolution matters. Giles is active in the firm's pro bono projects and diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

Finally, the Board of Port Wardens named Kenneth Wood as Treasurer. Prior to retiring in April 2022, Wood spent 39 years in commercial banking, most of which was spent at Bank of America. In addition to serving on the board ISM, he is also a board member of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and a member of the President's Council of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

The Board of Port Wardens also welcomed new members Erik C. Klein, CPA, an Audit Supervisor at Brinker Simpson & Company, and John P. Ventura, Senior Vice President and Senior Private Banking Relationship Manager at WSFS Wealth. The members of the Board of Port Wardens have already assumed their new roles and started their work leading ISM into the new year.

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About Independence Seaport Museum

Independence Seaport Museum encourages visitors to discover Philadelphia's river of history and world of connections. Stewards of Cruiser *Olympia* and World War II-era Submarine *Becuna*, ISM is home to a boatbuilding workshop, interactive exhibitions, and one of the largest collections of historic maritime artifacts in the world. Visitors can explore the historic and beautiful Delaware River first-hand by renting a boat from the Museum or by participating in one of our kayak excursions. The Independence Seaport Museum is the premier, year-round destination on the Penn's Landing waterfront. Visit daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and see our full schedule of programs and events at phillyseaport.org.