Coast Guard Looks to Divest Nobska Lighthouse Property

By: Elizabeth W. Saito, January 7, 2014



JEFFREY URQUHART/ENTERPRISE - Nobska Lighthouse Friday afternoon as the storm clears out.

The Coast Guard no longer wishes to own Nobska lighthouse on Nobska Point in Woods Hole.

The property, which includes the lighthouse and a dwelling, could have a new owner within the year, said Coast Guard spokesman Lieutenant Joseph M. Klinker.

The Coast Guard will continue to own and maintain the navigational light on the property. “But when we say that,

it's literally the object that lights up," Lt. Klinker said. "All other elements will be considered for divestiture." That includes the structure of the lighthouse itself.

The Nobska lighthouse property was put "on a list for consideration for divestiture" in September, Lt. Klinker said.

It could be "months or years" before the property is officially listed with the General Services Administration (GSA), the government agency which handles the transfer and auctioning of federal property, Lt. Klinker said.

The former sector commander of the Woods Hole Coast Guard station, Captain Verne D. Gifford, used to live in the house on the property. He and his family moved out in June when he got promoted, Lt. Klinker said.

At that time, Coast Guard officials toured the property and deemed it "not habitable" and so the new sector commander, Captain John T. Kondratowicz, did not move in.

Lt. Klinker said the property's buildings are rotting and mildewed. There are also "heating issues." Fixing these problems would cost an estimated half-million dollars, he said.

In addition to allowing the Coast Guard to maintain the lighthouse's light, any buyer would need to agree to myriad "restrictions" related to maintaining the property, Lt. Klinker said. Sometimes buyers are required to keep the lighthouse open to the public, he said. Lt. Klinker did not know if this would be the case for Nobska lighthouse.

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Eric Turkington

Lt. Klinker said GSA would try to transfer the property to a government or nonprofit entity before putting the lighthouse on the open market.

According to the GSA website, the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act "recognizes the cultural, recreational, and educational value associated with historic light stations by allowing these national treasures

to be transferred at no cost to federal agencies, state and local governments, nonprofit corporations, educational and community development organizations... In the event that no steward is recommended to receive the historic light station, GSA will sell the property in accordance with procedures outlined in the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act."

Former state representative Eric T. Turkington alerted the Woods Hole Community Association at its December meeting that the Coast Guard was looking to divest the lighthouse. "It's preliminary as far as I can tell," Mr. Turkington said in a phone interview yesterday. "But it's clearly coming."

"[Nobska lighthouse] is an icon, it's a symbol of this town, and everyone's got an interest in it," he said. "The time to think about it is now."

Lt. Klinker said the Coast Guard would also continue to operate the fog horn at Nobska Point.