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Council favours historic Stores building upgrade

BY MALCOLM CURTIS
Times Colonist staff

The historic Stores building would temporarily house public washrooms and retail stores under an interim plan to upgrade the Belleville Street international ship terminal.

The Provincial Capital Commission is seeking rezoning of the area around the former shipping warehouse at 254 Belleville St.— currently empty — to improve facilities at the Victoria Clipper terminal. City council this week recommended sending the proposal to a public hearing.

The commission recently acquired the land from the federal Department of Transport as part of the transfer of harbour lands from Ottawa.

The rezoning would have the Stores building contain stores catering to recreational boaters, a coffee shop, grocery store, currency exchange or other busi-

nesses like bike and car rental outlets, said PCC chairwoman Pamela Charlesworth. The two-storey structure, once used by Stena Lines and CP Ships, offers 3,200 square feet of space.

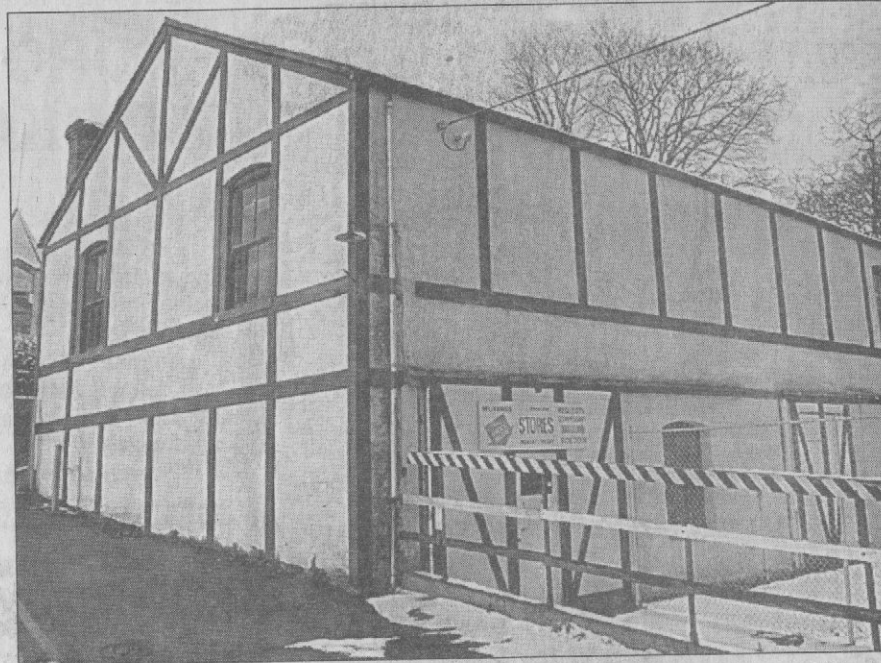
As part of the rezoning, the building would be designated a heritage structure.

The idea is to provide revenue-generating services to the 400,000 travellers who annually use the Clipper and other ferries like the Victoria Express, said Charlesworth.

But any such development would only be a temporary measure while the PCC is developing its comprehensive plan for the international terminal at 430 Belleville St., she said.

The commission is planning a \$17-million development to replace the Coho and Clipper terminals. Charlesworth hopes the project can get underway this year, though financial discussions are still continuing.

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The Stores Building at 254 Belleville St.

Darren Stone/Times Colonist

Stores: Coho site upgraded

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The plan would see a three-storey terminal, an enclosed parking area, a public plaza and waterfront promenades in place of the existing Coho site, which has also been acquired by the PCC.

Tied into that development would be an upgrading of the former CPR Steamship Terminal, designed by famed Victoria architect Francis Rattenbury, which now houses the Royal London Wax Museum.

An elevator is being installed to provide access to the upper two floors of the heritage building so they can be used for government offices and possibly a restaurant while the wax museum continues to use the building's lower two floors.

Ken Lane, manager of the museum, said he had reached a three-year lease agreement with the PCC with an option for a further three years. Lane had been faced with closing the business after the commission threatened a 60 per cent rent increase. Lane said that increase will now be phased in over six years.

The museum now can concentrate on developing a display to coincide with the Queen's Golden Jubilee, which should be in place for a possible visit to Victoria by the monarch in October, he said.