

# Lockport wins federal grant to aid in Erie Canal lock restoration

By Thomas J. Prohaska

LOCKPORT - The City of Lockport has won a \$200,000 federal grant that will help pay for the restoration of the 19th-century Erie Canal locks to working order as a tourist attraction.

The city was approved for a National Maritime Heritage Grant that will pay half the cost of a new wooden gate on one of the locks, announced Brian M. Smith, city planning and development director.

The city already has \$1.3 million in hand from the state's Empire State Development Corp. that will pay for work to restore Lock 68, which would be the third of the Flight of Five locks to be restored.

The stairstep locks were used to move boats up and down the Niagara Escarpment from the time the canal opened in 1825 until 1914, when the two current steel locks were installed. The Flight of Five was used only as a spillway for a century, until two of the five, called Locks 69 and 70 by the state Canal Corp., were returned to working order in a \$1.74 million project that opened in late 2014. They are the middle lock and the second one from the top of the Flight.

Design work was completed this year to restore Lock 68, the second one from the bottom. Smith said the timetable for the construction work is still a little cloudy.

"We're going to try to avoid most of the tourist season," said Smith, who estimated that work could begin at Lock 68 next September and continue

through June 2018.

The money from Empire State Development includes the rest of the estimated construction cost, including the other half of the heavy wooden gate that opens and closes to let water in and out of the lock.

The city also received \$300,000 in Niagara River Greenway funds and a grant from the state Dormitory Authority that allowed construction of a Locks Heritage Gateway Exhibit that opened in September on Canal Street above the locks.

Mayor Anne E. McCaffrey said the city is making long-term inquiries about funding for restoration of the top and bottom locks, Locks 67 and 71, to complete the Flight of Five project.

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