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WEEKEND EDITION

NEWPORT

Lighthouse foundation wants to keep antiques at Armory

The nonprofit group plans to submit a bid to operate the Thames Street building.

By Sean Flynn
Daily News staff

Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation Armory Antiques is planning to meet Friday's deadline to submit a proposal to lease the city-owned Armory on lower Thames Street in Newport.

Dave McCurdy, executive director of the nonprofit Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation, said the organization has had an office in the Armory for the past 25 years, but overseeing the antique dealers who sublet space in the building would be a new endeavor.

"We would operate the Armory as an antique center and include education and restoration as part of our mission," McCurdy said.

The Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation faces some competition for the lease.

Barry Clifford, who founded the Whydah Sea Lab & Learning Center, popularly known as the Whydah Pirate Museum, has proposed moving his museum from Provincetown, Mass., to the Armory. He also is expected to submit a formal proposal by the deadline.

The Redevelopment Agency last month evicted Armory Antiques and Fine Arts, owned by Gib Conklin, for failure to pay back rent. Conklin's rent was \$4,200 a month and he was about \$40,000 behind in payments, according

to Bruce T. Bartlett, the agency's executive director.

However, the Armory remains the home of the Armory Antiques Center that currently displays goods from about 55 dealers. The city had leased the building to Conklin, who then sublet floor space and display cases to the other vendors. Bartlett said dealers had been paying Conklin, but the city had not received any of that money in the months prior to the eviction.

The Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation offered to become the master tenant for the antique dealers. The Redevelopment Agency accepted the offer on a temporary basis, until Jan. 15. By that time, the agency is expected to



David Hansen ♦ Daily News staff

Gary Adriance, owner of Adriance Furnituremakers, arranges some pieces Thursday in a space in the Armory on Thames Street in Newport. Adriance says if the Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation is chosen to oversee the building, he will sublet a space as a showplace for merchandise from his Bellevue Avenue gallery.

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