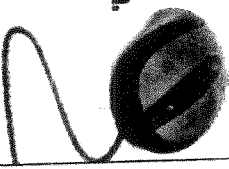


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Obituaries 3-3B
TV/Puzzles 4B
Weather 6B

SECTION

B

Grant sought for tugboats

GE, DonJon plan to collaborate on Hybrid Harbor Tug Project

By **DAVID BRUCE**
david.bruce@timesnews.com

Two Erie-based companies share a common goal: They want to build hybrid tugboats.

GE Transportation and DonJon Shipbuilding and Repair are bidding on a \$24

million federal grant that would be used for their Hybrid Harbor Tug Project.

An additional \$6 million in funding would come from DonJon and/or GE Transportation.

"We're in the preliminary stages of the grant process," DonJon owner J. Arnold Witte said. "We are hopeful."

The grant is part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, which awards funding to innovative transportation projects.

The diesel/electric-powered tugboat would use 25 percent less fuel and emit up to 35 percent less pollutants than a traditional, diesel-powered tugboat.

Witte and GE officials discussed the project Monday morning with Sen. Bob Casey and Rep. Kathy Dahlkemper, of Erie, D-3rd Dist., during a tour of DonJon, 220 E. Bayfront Parkway.

"It's a great project, not just for our

► Please see **TUGBOAT, 5B**

Tugboat: Companies vie for grant

Continued from 1B

community but for the entire country," Dahlkemper said. "It would mean more jobs at Donjon, and it would solidify jobs at the GE plant in Grove City."

GE's Grove City plant would supply the propulsion systems, which would include a six-cylinder diesel engine and sodium-based Durathon battery, GE spokesman Chris Banocy said. The battery would be charged at night when the tugboat is docked, or during the day using a small, onboard generator.

"When the tugboat is in operation, you run the engine for optimum fuel consumption and use the battery during peak demands," Banocy said. "Like when you're pulling another boat."

The grant would be used to build a prototype tugboat. The

WHAT'S NEXT

GE Transportation and Donjon Shipbuilding and Repair must submit their grant application to the Department of Transportation by Monday. The grant is expected to be awarded by late September.

conditions of the grant require that the prototype be built by the end of 2012.

Donjon and GE Transportation would then decide about building additional tugboats, Banocy said.

Business is good at Donjon, whether or not it gets the grant.

The number of full-time employees working at the shipyard is expected to increase over the next two years from about 80 to between 100 and 150, Witte said.

"Getting the grant would mean an additional 75 to 100 employ-

ees on top of that," Witte said.

Seeing a local business like Donjon thrive during a time of economic recession is encouraging, Casey said. It's government's job to support business, whether it's through this grant or future funding projects, he said.

"We can certainly urge the federal government to invest in (this project), but I don't want to put all the emphasis on this round of federal funding," Casey said. "There are other ways to support these types of projects."

Getting the grant is important to the project, but it could continue even without it, Banocy said.

"We'd be happy if this comes through, but we're not sure one way or the other if it doesn't," Banocy said.

DAVID BRUCE can be reached at 870-1736 or by e-mail.

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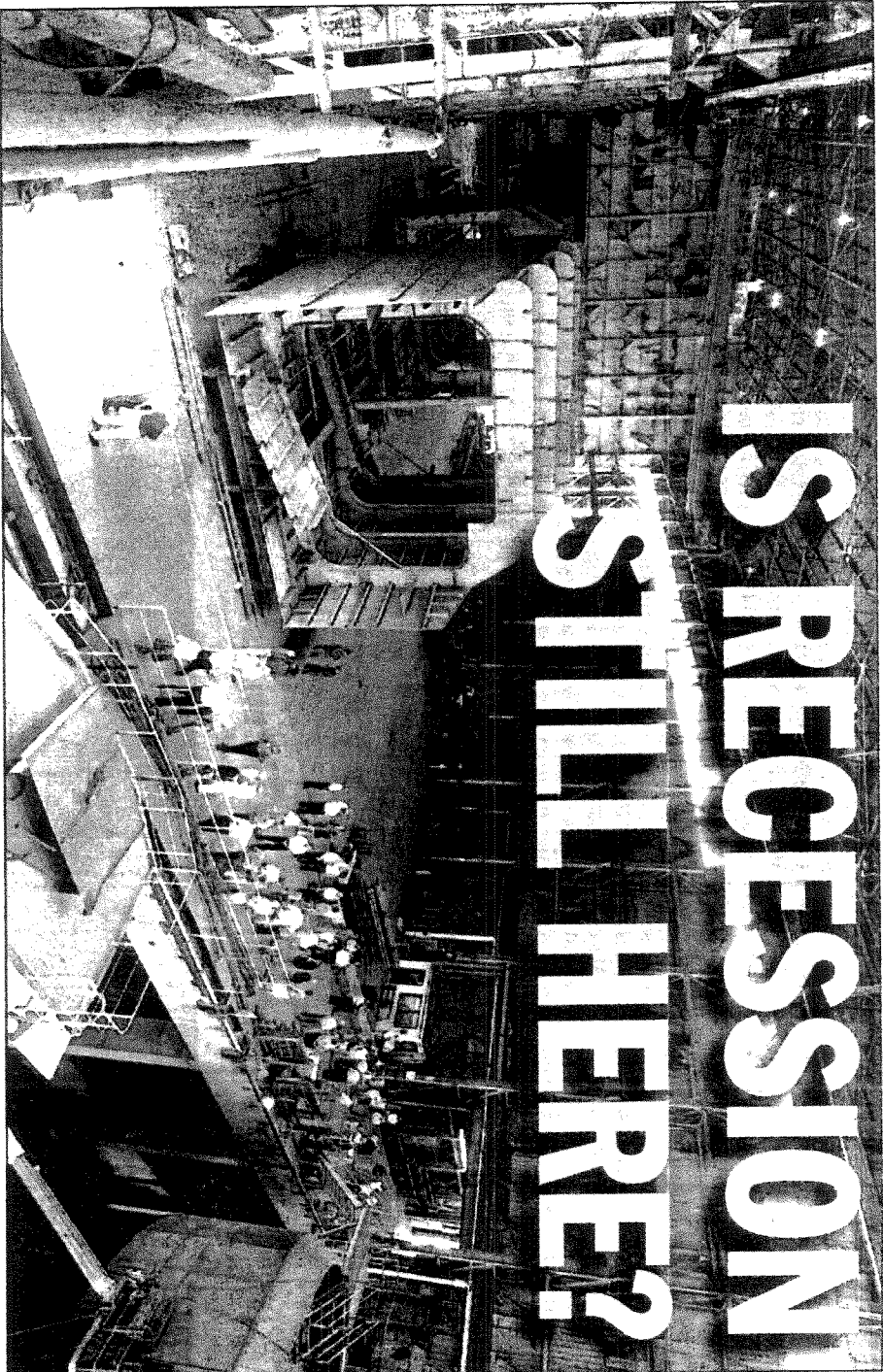
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IS RECESSION STILL HERE?



CHRISTOPHER MILLETTE/Erie Times-News

Parts of a 740-foot-long, dry-cargo barge are inside the manufacturing room at Dondon Shipbuilding and Repair on the east bayfront. Construction is scheduled to be complete in March 2012. Manufacturing in the region is one measure of whether the economy is improving.