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Friends of cruises: Carnival, government leaders trade gestures of support

By [David Slade](#)

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With a lawsuit pending and the city set to review plans for a new passenger terminal, Carnival Cruise Lines and its supporters in business and government exchanged gestures of support Wednesday in Charleston and Miami.



Photo by David Slade

Passengers gather aboard the Carnival cruise ship Fantasy after visiting Charleston on Wednesday.

In Charleston on the cruise ship Fantasy, members of the Cruise Business Council attended a luncheon at which Carnival announced an \$18,000 donation to the Medical University of South Carolina Children's Hospital, and a related effort to promote local businesses to cruise customers.

The MUSC donation is part of a broader commitment announced last year in which Carnival has sent entertainers to visit hospitalized children, and donated video games, laptop computers and toys.

Part of the latest donation comes from \$8,000 local businesses spent on ads in Carnival's "Charleston Insider Deals" booklet, which will be given to people planning cruises.

Also Wednesday, Carnival's top executives were visited at the company's corporate headquarters in Miami by Charleston Mayor Joe Riley, State Ports Authority CEO Jim Newsome, SPA Chairman Bill Stern, InterTech Group Inc. CEO Anita Zucker and Hall's Chop House owner Bill Hall, representing business groups.

"It was a meeting we scheduled quite some time ago ... to confirm to Carnival how valuable a business partner they are in our community and how pleased we are with their operations, their company and their ships," Riley said. "And, how pleased we are with the new terminal that's being planned because of their presence."

The SPA plans this year to convert a warehouse on Union Pier near Laurens Street into a \$35 million cruise ship terminal. It would replace the 1973 terminal near the foot of Market Street. The city's Board of Architectural Review will get its first look at the project Wednesday.

Carnival decided to make Charleston a home port in the fall of 2009, prompting a fresh look at the terminal, which the SPA had long discussed replacing.

Cruise ships have been a subject of controversy in Charleston for at least a decade, mostly because of their size and the number of tourists they disgorge onto city streets, but increasing numbers of cruise ships and the cruise terminal plan have taken the issue to a new level.

On June 13, the Southern Environmental Law Center sued Carnival on behalf of Coastal the Conservation League, the Preservation Society of Charleston and the city's Ansonborough and Charlestowne neighborhoods, seeking to raise legal questions about Carnival's use of Union Pier.

The city and the SPA have joined the suit, siding with Carnival.

Katie Zimmerman of the Coastal Conservation League said her organization doesn't want to drive Carnival away.

"We've just been asking for basic standards, and we've been asking for them for years now," she said.

Zimmerman said it's nice that Carnival made another donation to the MUSC Children's Hospital.

"Another great way to help all of us here, as far as public health goes, is to work on shore-side power to reduce their emissions while they're in port," she said, referring to the idea of using electric power to run ship systems while in port, rather than burning fuel.

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