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## Palm Beach County OKs \$1 million for sinking sub as artificial reef

POLITICS By [Eliot Kleinberg](#) - Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

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USS Clamagore at Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum in Charleston, S.C. (USS Clamagore Preservation & Memorial Association)

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The Cold War-era [USS Clamagore](#) is one step closer to a final resting place as [Florida's only submarine artificial reef](#).

Palm Beach County Commissioners voted 7-0 at Tuesday's meeting to pay a Miami firm \$1 million to coordinate the sinking off the 320-foot "Gray Ghost of the Florida Coast," perhaps as early as this summer, in water about 90 feet

deep 1½ miles off the Juno Beach Pier. The sub would be the newest addition to the county's renowned [150-plus piece artificial reef program](#).

The money will come from a county trust fund fed by vessel registration fees. A big point for commissioners: The county doesn't spend a penny unless the private firm that will sink the sub raises the additional \$3 million it needs and the sinking happens, according to Rob Robbins, director of the county's [Department of Environmental Resources Management](#).

**The Clamagore: A photo gallery [www.mypalmbeachpost.com/clamagore](http://www.mypalmbeachpost.com/clamagore)**

The Clamagore, which trained sailors to track Soviet nuclear subs, was retired in 1975. Since 1981 it has been docked at the [Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum](#) near Charleston, S.C. Patriots Point has said the sub suffers from serious structural fatigue and making it safe would cost about \$6 million.

The museum signed a deal last spring with [Artificial Reefs International-Clamagore](#), a subsidiary of Miami-based [CRB Geological and Environmental Services](#), to find a home for it somewhere in the ocean. Total cost for the project could be as much as \$4 million, but ARI parent CRB-GES has said it plans to raise the balance through sponsorships and other sources.

No Clamagore veterans spoke or attended Tuesday. Veterans have previously said they'd prefer the sub be in a museum but would rather see it as a reef than scrap.

Robbins conceded that "a million dollars dedicated for the sinking of a ship is a lot of money." But he said big artificial reefs off Pensacola and the Florida Keys have been good for tourism, sparking increases in dive trips.

Commissioner Hal Valeche asked if organizers are confident they can raise the other \$3 million. Robbins said ARI has told him that if the county is in, the other group's investors are "more than halfway there."

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## ***About the Author***



**ELIOT KLEINBERG**



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