



Fort Worden

Advisory Committee

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October 20, 2012

Dear Washington State Parks and Recreation Commissioners:

Since its creation in 1973 by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, the Fort Worden Advisory Committee (FWAC) has provided input, advice, and recommendations concerning the operation and management of Fort Worden State Park. Our greatest concerns have always been reserved for changes or actions that could threaten the ability of Fort Worden State Park to provide our citizens with the opportunities to enjoy recreational activities, to learn, and to understand and appreciate the history of this unique park. When the FWAC was originally created, it was never imagined that the greatest threat to Fort Worden State park would come from within – from the inability of Washington State Parks to provide the resources necessary to properly maintain the park. We understand this fiscal crisis is not the fault of Washington State Parks, the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, nor for that matter, the Washington State government. At any rate this is not the time to attempt to fix blame, but rather to find solutions.

It is our belief that the proposed co-management partnership between the Fort Worden Public Development Authority (FWPDA) and the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission offers the most viable solution by which Fort Worden State Park can fulfill its great potential for recreation and learning. This perspective is based on the Fort Worden Advisory Committee's close scrutiny and participation in the months-long process that has led to the FWPDA Business Plan to be presented to you on October 25. We have attended numerous planning sessions, FWPDA board meetings, and several public meetings, (two of which we co-sponsored). We have heard the arguments. pro and con, and recognize and appreciate the strong feelings this proposal has engendered.

By having the FWPDA take responsibility for the facilities and visitor services within the identified campus area of the park while Washington State Parks continues operation of the campgrounds, beach, Artillery Hill, and Chinese Gardens, and other public areas, both entities are ideally positioned to do what each can do best. The FWPDA can bring its business and marketing acumen to bear and provide lease agreements that will lead to capital investment. The park's capital needs will reach some \$50 million over the next 20 years and it is clear that Washington State will not have the means to provide such funding. Washington State Parks can use its experience and staff to provide safe and clean campgrounds, respond to emergencies, and oversee recreation use and ensure protection and preservation of park's natural and cultural environment. We are hopeful that any state parks employees displaced by this plan can be placed in similar positions within the Washington State Parks system, but it seems evident that if Washington State Parks cannot adequately fund the Fort Worden State Park operations, staffing reductions will occur.

It is important to keep in mind that this is a plan, not a prescription. There will be events, actions, and opportunities along the way that may result in minor adjustments. These can be dealt with as long as both parties act in good faith and remain true to the overall goals of the plan. As stated above, the proposal has caused controversy and dissent, largely from a small group of vocal participants, but amidst the controversy, no one has produced a viable alternative to that authored by the FWPDA.

There are many issues to be resolved, one of which merit special mention here. In the initial stage, a state-funded subsidy, adequate to ensure success of this proposal is a critical need. This will ensure the co-management partnership is successful from the beginning and into the long run.

We are confident in the professionalism exhibited by the FWPDA board, the economic and social research it has carried out, and by the sincerity of its members. We feel the FWPDA Board, assisted by the capable Washington State Parks staff, will be able to deal with the challenges that lie ahead. Should this proposal not be accepted, the well documented inability of Washington State Parks to provide the financial resources needed to operate and maintain Fort Worden State Park, and the lack of any alternative course of action will inevitably lead to the reduction in the level of its existing services, further deterioration of its treasured historic resources, loss of staff due to ongoing budget challenges and the possibility of many of the Fort Worden partners leaving the park, and with them, the vision for a vibrant and healthy lifelong learning center at Fort Worden.

Sincerely,

(signed)

Gary Cummins
Chair,
Fort Worden Advisory Committee