

# FORT WORDEN FEBRUARY 16<sup>TH</sup> OPEN HOUSE

## Responses to Questions

### GENERAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

*Fort Worden State Park belongs to all people. It is not just a local PT resource—but a state-wide destination.*

The PDA understands that Fort Worden is multi-faceted and is defined as many things: a destination, a conference center, a park, campgrounds, an employer, a National Historic Landmark, home to Centrum, Port Townsend Marine Science Center, Port Townsend School of Woodworking and Historic Trades, Madrona MindBody Institute, Goddard College West, Peninsula College Jefferson County, and now a Life Long Learning Center. Fort Worden does belong to everyone. The PDA is committed to maintaining the quality and variety of programs while insuring access to both local users and out of town visitors. It will remain a public park.

*Is Fort Worden inside City limits?*

Yes, Fort Worden is inside the City limits and is 434 acres in size.

*What is the annual cost to maintain the 100+ historic buildings at Fort Worden?*

State Parks provides funds each biennium for deferred and planned maintenance at the Fort. It fluctuates based on the State Park budget. In 11-13 budget (at this time), they allowed \$68,000 for planned maintenance and \$200,000 for deferred maintenance (projects identified in 1999-2001 that have not been repaired or improved). The PDA is in the process of preparing a 10-year capital improvement program which will include items such as infrastructure maintenance and improvement, building and grounds maintenance, etc. The PDA will set up a capital reserve fund.

*Wasn't the youth hostel priced out by the new rates? Why was it closed?*

The closure of the Hostel was the decision between State Parks and the hostel manager. The PDA was not involved. The square foot rate was 11 cents, and after the appraisals were completed in 2011, the new State Park rate would have been 29 cents per square foot after discounts were applied for providing public programs as well as park improvement efforts. These rates are still below other rental rates in Port Townsend. The annual occupancy rate and revenues generated by the hostel may not have been enough to keep the business sustainable. The PDA would welcome a new hostel operator if he or she aligns with the goals of the Lifelong Learning Center and could make it a viable business.

*Shouldn't the Park service staff be more proactive with customer service instead of just checking on Discover Passes?*

This comment/question will be passed along to the Ranger staff at Fort Worden.

**LIFELONG LEARNING CENTER (LLC):**

*What is the vision of how the LLC will operate?*

The LLC vision and operations have been outlined in the State Parks business plan, site and facilities use and development plan and the design guidelines (historic preservation guidelines). In sum, the Life Long Learning Center model is focused on attracting new educational entities to Fort that will renovate and occupy unused or under-used buildings, will put on programs that will attract local, regional and national students or audiences to Fort Worden, and will otherwise help the Fort fulfill its potential as a place of learning and growth. The PDA is working to update this plan to support a new management strategy for the Park and to make management of and access to the Park more streamlined and efficient by simplifying leases, and coordinating reservations, marketing, capital projects, program development and fundraising among program partners.

The lifelong learning vision enables the PDA to work towards attracting vocational, avocational and educational institutions to be part of the vision and to foster a culture of collaboration and mutual support. This is what makes fulfilling the vision exciting. The Lifelong Learning Center model allows for the park-like elements of the Fort – the campgrounds, the trails, the beaches, the natural areas – to be sustained through the revenues of the entire operation.

In practical terms, the PDA board would hire a professional and experienced with a proven record of leading a combined conference center/park. That manager would employ professionals to carry out the mission of the entire operation.

*The Vision of LLC seems clear, but what is the vision for the rest of the park?*

The vision of the LLC is for all of Fort Worden and not just sections of the park. The goal is that the user would continue to have a seamless experience, whether in the developed campus, or walking the beach or hiking the trails along the bluff. Uses would remain the same and to the common visitor there would not be a significant difference if it were managed by State Parks or the PDA.

**PUBLIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY:**

*Can the PDA raise my taxes?*

No, under state law, PDA's do not have any taxing authority. A PDA does, however, have the power to issue tax exempt municipal bonds for capital projects. Those bonds must be repaid through the revenue streams generated by the enterprise.

*Does that mean the City guarantees the PDA's bond?*

No. The PDA is a separate municipal entity from the City and is responsible for its own repayment of bonds. The charter that set up the PDA makes it clear that the city will not take responsibility for PDA bonds. The PDA must stand on its own.

*The Lifelong Learning Center (LLLC) name is awkward? And Public Development Authority sounds too bureaucratic and top-heavy.*

We agree. The name is LLLC is too long and needs to be shortened. And, the PDA acronym is not appropriate for what we are trying to accomplish. The board would like to explore alternative names in the future.

*What is the operating budget gap the PDA has to address?*

After analyzing 2011 Fort Worden financials, our Operations Committee has identified an operating gap of about \$700K per year. State Parks staff believes that it may be higher but they have not done an annual accounting separating out other costs (e.g., Rothschild House and Fort Townsend) within the overall operating budget. The important fact here is that Fort Worden operates in the red at least \$700,000 annually. With the elimination of state general fund support and the less than successful Discover Pass program, it is unclear how State Parks will fill the gap without future cuts to staffing and other services at the Fort. The PDA's business plan is looking at a three-prong effort to make up the \$700K shortfall: by increasing revenues, reducing operating expenses, and attracting new funding sources (federal and private foundation grants, membership and individual donors).

*Which comes first for the PDA – to raise money to support the park operations or to transfer Fort Worden and then get funds to support operations?*

It is a combination. There are revenues that are generated at Fort Worden as it operates the conference center, camping, vacation housing, etc. and those funds will be used to continue to operate the park. Concurrently, operational costs will need to be reduced to align with the level of revenue generated. The PDA will need to work with increasing the revenues with the partner organizations and marketing efforts as well as work with the Fort Worden Conservancy for developing philanthropic funds that support capital projects and programs.

*Is the PDA looking to bring a big hotel chain to Fort Worden?*

The 2008 Business & Operating Plan for Fort Worden (adopted by the Parks Commission) recommended that attracting new lodging opportunities to the Park was a priority strategy to help implement the Lifelong Learning Center vision and to help make the Fort more sustainable. The vision calls for a range of housing, from very inexpensive to more expensive to meet the needs and interests of overnight guests and students. Any new hotel development would need to be consistent with the historical preservation guidelines adopted by the Commission. It is anticipated that any new hotel development would be the (re)development of an existing historic building (e.g., Barracks Building 225 or Schoolhouse). In the past there have been preliminary discussions with hotel developers like a McMenamin's, headquartered in Oregon. McMenamin's has been very successful in

restoring historic buildings for pubs, restaurants and unique meeting spaces and hotels. In any event, it is conceivable that a small boutique chain could (re)develop a hotel at the Fort in the future.

*Will the PDA charge parking fees?*

The PDA's revenue strategies do not include implementing a parking fee. The PDA hopes to ensure that the park remains open to the public of all economic levels to use.

*How will the PDA increase the diversity of programs for lower income people?*

The PDA does not intend to become a provider of programs—that is better left to the Fort Worden Partner organizations (e.g., Centrum, Marine Science Center, Madrona MindBody Institute, PT School of Woodworking, Goddard and Peninsula Colleges). However, it is the intention of the PDA Board to encourage that LLC programs are accessible to all income levels and, as appropriate, all age groups. The PDA may help support this objective by working with partner organizations in securing grants and other funds to promote accessibility to all groups. The PDA seeks to make current partners successful and to find new partners to fill other needs, and in particular to offer educational programs during the fall, winter and spring.

To that end the PDA is committed to:

- Work to maintain regular public transportation serve the park.
- Work with all park partners to identify funding and publicize subsidies for low income families or individuals, including: scholarships, work study, financial aid, internships, empty seat policies, family discounts, etc.
- Investigate the feasibility of providing on-site child care.
- To continue the current practice to offer camping passes for low income seniors, Veterans and Foster Families

*Fort Worden lacks wireless and good internet connections. How will the PDA address this critical need at the Fort?*

Fort Worden is currently on the priority list to receive broadband through the NOANet program. Construction is scheduled this spring/summer. The PDA would ensure that all future redevelopment in the Park would connect to the basic broadband infrastructure to be installed.

*Will existing tenant leases and costs go up under PDA management?*

State Parks recently completed a market appraisal of all leases and buildings at the Fort. All leases are now calculated on fair-market rate, but are based on how the tenant meets the objectives of increasing programming and other goals of the Lifelong Learning Center. By

necessity, leases are negotiated on a case-by-case basis. The PDA would likely continue with current lease practices in place.

*The PDA's initial financial strategy seems to be vague.*

True. We have just started to review current financial and to make new projections. The business plan will be developing much more refined financial statements. The financial information that we have been assessing is based on State Parks current budget and projected out over the next ten 10 years. Former Fort Worden State Park Manager Kate Burke has been retained to help with the Business Plan. In addition, we will be contracting with a qualified consulting firm to assist in the development of the business plan.

*What happens if the PDA fails? Who pays upon default?*

As part of the deed conditions, if the PDA does not comply with the terms of the transfer agreement, or cannot meet its financial obligations, the Park will revert back to State Parks. This is why the Parks Commission is insistent on the preparation of an updated and credible business plan prior to any transfer of a portion of, or the entire park. State Parks includes a reversionary clause in all of its park transfers such as Fay Bainbridge, Fort Ward and Brooks Memorial. It is assumed that the Commission would require the same reversionary clause with Fort Worden.

*What's next? Where from here?*

The next steps are to continue community outreach, to develop a business plan that is based on the criteria from State Parks and to work with State Parks Commission and Executive Management. It is anticipated that the State Parks Commission will make a decision soon on the direction for Fort Worden.

**FUTURE PROGRAMS:**

*Is there the potential for continuing education for seniors – what is & will be available (e.g., Elderhostel)? Who will offer it?*

The Fort Worden PDA acknowledges that there is a need for increasing the opportunities for continuing education for seniors through the Elderhostel Roads Scholar program or other similar programs (Osher, Encore Colleges, etc) In addition, the PDA will work with partner organizations to develop engaging and educational programs and appropriate services to support continuing education programs at the LLLC.

*How can the PDA address the need for youth programs and providing a central learning place for young people?*

The PDA will work with K -12 schools and youth groups (Boiler Room, WMCA, afterschool programs, etc.) to identify and support programs and activities that enhance their missions for education, recreation and civic engagement at Fort Worden.

The PDA will encourage park partners to capitalize on local resources – teachers, facilities, resources, expertise, youth, retirees – when developing and expanding LLLC programs.

Towards that end, there are many organizations in the community that need to be brought into the conversation: for example, the Northwest Maritime Center, Wooden Boat School, Key City Theater, Historical Society, WSU Extension, Jefferson County Higher Education Center, Chimacum/Quilcene/PT School Districts, Team Jefferson, City and County Libraries, the Port Townsend Film Institute, Landworks Collaborative, Jefferson Land Trust, etc. The PDA will collaborate with these and other community partners to sustain and enhance programs, recognizing that the vision of a LLLC goes “outside the gates” of the Park.

### *Why is Building 202’s renovation the catalyst project for the PDA?*

Building 202 will provide state-of-the-art classrooms to the anchor partners, Peninsula College and Goddard College, as well as to other educational organizations in the Park and to the community at large. Ultimately, all educational partners could be served by coordinating and sharing myriad, student support services as appropriate: for example, resource center, reference library, learning labs, financial aid, academic counseling, and child care. There is already \$4.5 million earmarked from state and local sources to renovate Building 202; a fundraising campaign for the remaining \$500,000 needed is underway. Building 202 would provide Jefferson County’s first-ever permanent, multi-use college center, which offers tremendous direct and indirect benefits to the community.

### *There is the need FOR more classrooms at Fort Worden.*

There are already many spaces at the Park available during the shoulder or non-peak times, but that would need some remodeling to be appropriate for LLLC programs. This is one of the great assets of the LLLC, and the vision of the PDA is to develop them to be accessible, thus making the park active year round.

### *How do people easily find out what is going on here?*

Currently, there is a website – [fortworden.net](http://fortworden.net) -- in which the Fort Worden Partners list many of the programs as well as links to their websites with more specific program information. In addition, the PDA website— [fwpda.org](http://fwpda.org)—now hosts information on the planning process and implementation of the LLLC, including a calendar, a PDA document archive, and contact information for the PDA board and partners.

One of the biggest opportunities that the PDA can bring to the Park is better exposure and a coordinated marketing strategy. State Parks has not provided funding or support for an aggressive and comprehensive advertising and marketing effort for Fort Worden and its partner organizations.

### *How does program cost pencil out? Do programs break even?*

Each organization/partner is responsible for the costs associated with developing and implementing its programs. Each one of the partner organizations would have to address the break even or subsidy levels for its own program.

*How would the PDA support ongoing restoration & stewardship of beaches, trails, natural areas, etc.?*

The PDA would encourage a continued relationship and support of the great work of the Marine Science Center, Student Conservation Association, the volunteer work of the Jefferson County Noxious Weed Board, 10,000 Years Institute, beach restoration group (Point Wilson Conservation Group – part of the Native Plant Society). The PDA would most likely continue to permit scientific research requests based on the same criteria that is used by State Parks. The PDA will need to review the State Parks Natural Resources Policy in order to adopt something similar in their management plan.

**EMPLOYEE AND VOLUNTEERS:**

*How will the PDA not lose the institutional knowledge base that exists there with current employees?*

The PDA does not want to lose any institutional knowledge of the existing employees if possible. If a transfer or longterm lease of part or all of the park is approved by the State Parks Commission, then the PDA will modify a specific business plan that includes the appropriate number of specialized jobs to fit the scale of our obligation. The PDA is a municipal entity. In accordance with civil service laws, those jobs would be posted. It is anticipated that many current Parks employees would apply for those jobs. The PDA will hire in accordance to qualifications. Some current Parks employees may choose to remain in the State Parks system, and if so, they retain full civil service rights in terms of employment. The PDA has retained former Park Manager Kate Burke to assure that this institutional knowledge of the planning process that led to the LLC vision is retained as well as the day-to-day experience of running the park the last nine years.

*What about shared staffing between Fort Worden, Old Fort Townsend., Fort Flagler—how will that be handled under the new management structure?*

Currently, Fort Worden shares staff with Fort Townsend and Rothschild House only. Fort Flagler is a separate park management area. Under a new PDA governance structure, Fort Townsend and Rothschild House staffing would remain with State Parks.

*How many employees work at campgrounds or buildings?*

In the 11-13 State Parks budget, the budget allotted 28.9 FTE (full time equivalent) State Park employees. Of that number, 1.84 FTEs were associated with Fort Townsend. The remaining FTEs (27.06), 26 full and part time employees work at Fort Worden. Some of the Ranger and Maintenance Staff do assist at Fort Townsend and Rothschild House when needed.

*If a transfer were to occur to the PDA, what would be the hiring process for Fort Worden employees?*

Ninety days prior to the transfer date, the PDA would post job openings and interview interested candidates to determine their qualifications. It is likely that there will be some new job descriptions and a new organizational chart that will be developed during the business plan process. Job descriptions will be revised as needed to implement the Lifelong Learning Center vision and as necessary for maintaining the park resources with the overall goal of providing a sustainable business model/business plan. The PDA would notify and hire the selected candidates upon the transition date.

*What kind of benefits and wages will be offered by the PDA?*

It is too early to give any definitive benefits or conditions of employment. However, all PDA would be considered “public” municipal employees. Salaries will be commensurate with market conditions and comparable duties and responsibilities of other similar jobs associated with conference centers, PDAs and municipal agencies. The PDA is currently reviewing and evaluating employee health benefits plans offered by the Association of Washington Cities ([www.awcnet.org/insurance](http://www.awcnet.org/insurance)) and private insurance companies (such as MetLife, Regence and Humana). During the business plan development, employee benefit packages will be reviewed by an insurance professional to develop the best and most cost effective plan for the PDA and their employees. In addition, the PDA is reviewing various retirements plans that include 401K, PERS (offered under the AWC plans) as well as SEP IRA. There may be certain services and operations that could be contracted for professional services, such as IT and marketing/advertising services.

*Would prevailing wages apply to PDA?*

In accordance with the Washington State Public Works Act, all projects that meet the definition of a public work (RCW 39.04.010) project, the PDA like all other state and local government agencies would be required to follow (RCW 39.02.020 and WAC 296.127.025 for federal projects) in paying prevailing wages.

*How will the volunteer program work under the new system? Many of the Park volunteers are from outside PT/outside of state.*

We do not see any significant changes in the volunteer system. Volunteers are a vital part of the Park’s resources. The PDA would encourage and want to continue to work with the volunteers. We would continue to recruit volunteers and camp hosts locally, regionally and nationally. As stated before, Fort Worden will always remain a park.

*How will living wages be addressed? Reducing labor costs by the PDA appears to be joining the race to the bottom.*

The salaries and benefits will be determined based on the ability to achieve financial stability. It may be a reduction in salary, benefits, and/or positions when compared to State



**government wages and benefits. The ability to generate revenue can help to offset staff reductions. Revenue that is created through increased programs, conferences, workshops, and vacationers that rent the accommodations, meeting rooms and campgrounds will determine the levels of reduction or additions. As Fort Worden succeeds economically it is the intent to share that success with the employees. It will take the combined efforts of everyone involved with Fort Worden, PDA Board, employees, volunteers, and partners to make Fort Worden sustainable each year.**