

Fort Vancouver National Historic Site

Frequently Asked Questions for Pearson Air Museum

February 13, 2013

Each national park is unique, has national significance, and was established for a specific purpose. Fort Vancouver was specifically established to preserve the resources associated with, and to tell the story of, fur trading and military history in the Pacific Northwest – including Army aviation and the “Golden Age of Flight.”

Pearson Air Museum (Museum) is an important resource of the national park system and a valued part of Fort Vancouver National Historic Site. For more than 40 years, the National Park has cared for and administered the historic buildings and grounds.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is the National Park Service taking over Pearson Air Museum?

A. The Museum is owned by the federal government and is administered by the National Park Service. It sits on federal land inside Fort Vancouver National Historic Site. In the past, the Museum has been operated by partner organizations through a Cooperative Agreement with the City of Vancouver (City). In 2005, the City entered into a sub-agreement that allowed the Fort Vancouver National Trust (Trust) to operate the Museum. The agreement between the National Park Service and the City of Vancouver concluded on February 1, 2013.

2. Why is this taking place now?

A. The agreement between the City of Vancouver and the National Park Service formerly in place was established 18 years ago, prior to the existence of the current Museum facility, and focused largely on construction and rehabilitation plans long since achieved. The National Park Service also sought a more direct connection with the Trust in light of several issues arising over special events held onsite. Specifically, components of some events that the Trust wanted to allow were prohibited by federal law, regulation, and policy to occur on National Park Service land. The National Park Service and Trust worked in good faith for many months last year to establish a new cooperative agreement for the Museum operation, but the parties’ objectives were too divergent. In January 2013 the Trust informed the NPS that they could not operate effectively as the manager of the Museum and comply with National Park Service rules. The letter stated, “This is not a match. It will not work.”

3. When is National Park Service operation scheduled to go into effect?

A. The agreement was concluded on February 1, 2013. The National Park Service recognized that the transition of the Museum’s operation could not happen instantaneously, and provided the Trust with a 45-day window within which operations would transition to the National Park Service. In addition, the

Trust was given 180 days to identify and relocate its private property. The National Park Service had hoped that public access would not be impacted and that the Museum would remain intact.

4. What has the National Park Service contributed to the Museum?

A. In 1972, the National Park Service purchased the land on which the Museum sits, and has since that time owned and administered the grounds and buildings where the Museum complex is located. Since 1998 the National Park Service has provided more than \$1,300,000 in funding support to the Museum and its immediate environs. Funding has been used for a wide range of activities including creating exhibits, painting, and constructing restrooms compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

5. What are the National Park Service's immediate plans for the Museum?

A. The National Park Service is committed to having Pearson open as a free public museum, and intended to assume operations through a seamless 45 day transition process. The Trust's decision to remove exhibits and collection items and close the museum was a surprise, and the National Park Service is now assessing next steps. The National Park Service is now working to chart a course for this future.

6. What about events that have been scheduled at the Museum through the current operator?

A. The National Park Service planned to honor existing commitments whenever possible. The National Park Service has extensive experience managing special events at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, permitting 90 events in 2012 that had a meaningful connection to the park's purpose and complied with applicable laws, regulation, and policy. However, the Trust announced that they are working with the relevant individuals to relocate planned events. Pearson Air Museum is available for special events. If you are interested in holding your event at Pearson, please contact Kimm Fox-Middleton at (360) 816-6243 or kimm_fox-middleton@nps.gov. Permitting information can be found on our website at www.nps.gov/fova.

7. What does this mean for the NPS relationship with the City?

A. The National Park Service continues to hold the City of Vancouver in high regard, and hopes to continue productive partnership agreements with the City for the good of the Vancouver National Historic Reserve, the local community, and the greater metropolitan area.