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STATE OF WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON STATE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

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March 29, 2012

Item E-3: Fort Worden State Park-Renaming the Commons Building— Requested Action

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: This item requests that the Commission formally rename the Commons building at Fort Worden State Park as the Nora Porter Commons. This item complies with our Centennial 2013 Plan element, "Our Commitments-Public Service and Partnerships" and with our core values.

SIGNIFICANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Nora Porter, long-time Port Townsend activist and dedicated supporter of Fort Worden State Park, died on October 31, 2011. Ms. Porter believed strongly that parks should be available to everyone to enjoy. She fought ardently against Commission and legislative initiatives to charge user fees in state parks, believing fees would exclude those of limited means who rely most on parks for respite and recreation.

Following the 2001 Commission decision establishing a five dollar parking fee, Ms. Porter helped spearhead a community campaign to essentially "buy" parking for visitors to Fort Worden State Park. Port Townsend was the only community to successfully undertake such an effort. When the parking fee was eliminated Nora was a strong supporter of the "opt in" donation program as a fund source for operating the state park system. Through this program, drivers were given an option to "opt-in" and provide a five-dollar donation to the agency when renewing their vehicle license tabs.

Ms. Porter later championed passage of a bill in 2009 that changed the donation program to one requiring drivers to "opt-out" or automatically make a five-dollar donation. The opt-out program dramatically increased donations and at its height accounted for about 16% of the agency's operating budget. More recently, Ms. Porter continued to strongly advocate free public access to Washington's state parks and lobbied against legislation establishing the Discover Pass access fee. The Commission and staff have great respect and appreciation for her enormous dedication to parks and her passion to keep them open and available to the public.

Ms. Porter was an exceptional advocate who also played an instrumental role in securing funds for the construction of the much needed Fort Worden Commons building. Staff, therefore, believes renaming the Commons as the "Nora Porter Commons" is a fitting tribute to someone so greatly admired.

AUTHORITY:

WAC 352-16-010 Naming and classification of state park areas; Commission Policy 72-78-1 Naming of Parks

SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

Appendix 1: 11/02/2011 Port Townsend Leader Article, Nora Porter, PT Civic Leader, Dies

Appendix 2: Commission Policy 72-78-1, Naming of Parks

REQUESTED ACTION OF COMMISSION:

That the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission:

1. Rename the Commons structure at Fort Worden State Park as the Nora Porter Commons.
2. Direct staff to replace signing and update print and electronic publications to reflect this action.

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Reviewers:

Randy Kline, SEPA: Following review, staff has determined that the action proposed for the Commission by staff is exempt from the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) pursuant to WAC 197-11-800 (14)(h).

Terri Heikkila, Fiscal Impact Statement: Fiscal impact of this item will include replacement of signing on the Commons structure, as well as direction signing to it. This cost is less than \$5,000. It is assumed that the new name will be included in printed materials as stocks are replenished in the future. Changes to the park's webpage will be completed by agency staff as part of regular webpage updates.

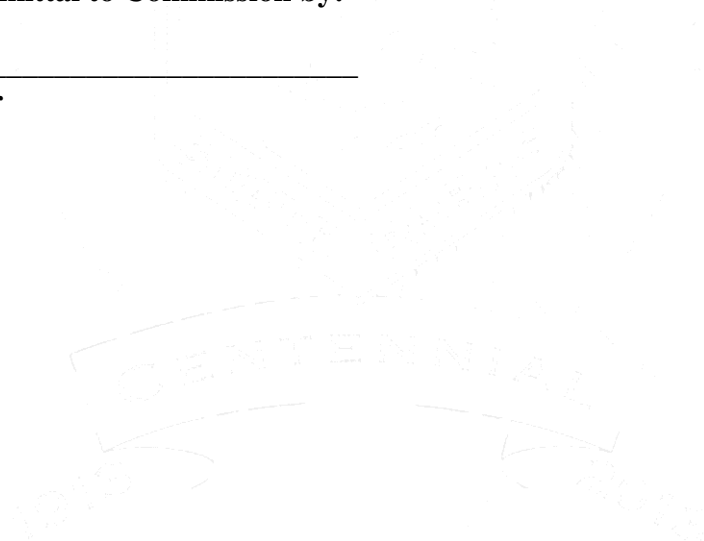
Jim Schwartz, Assistant Attorney General: Reviewed 02/22/2012

Larry Fairleigh, Assistant Director

Deputy Director (Acting) Ilene Frisch: _____

Approved for transmittal to Commission by:

Don Hoch, Director



APPENDIX 1
11/02/2011 PORT TOWNSEND LEADER ARTICLE

Nora Porter, PT Civic Leader, Dies

By Allison Arthur & Scott Wilson of the Leader

Nora Porter, a Port Townsend civic and political force for 40 years, died in the early morning of Monday, October 31, 2011.

Porter, 75, had not allowed her cancer to stop her from continuing to be a fighter through her final months. She kept heat on the Washington State Parks and Recreation Department for its day-use fees, further supported causes and charities that she helped create, especially Habitat for Humanity of Jefferson County, and gained a standing ovation as she accepted a volunteerism award last spring in the Heart of Service event.

Porter was a one-of-a-kind force to be reckoned with, who made big differences in her little backyard, friends and foes agree.

She was a school board member, a business owner, director of the chamber of commerce, a board member of Habitat for Humanity, a “conservative liberal” who mentored women and inspired fear in politicians.

She ran political campaigns, gave advice, managed state Rep. Lynn Kessler’s office in Olympia, and wasn’t shy about putting in her two cents on any subject for which she had the facts on her side. She was an effective advocate, more often than not marshaling the facts and the forces to get her way.

She spent much of the last few decades focused on Fort Worden State Park and was writing letters only months ago warning of the dire consequences of the Discover Pass. Many of her fears about the \$30 annual pass – that it would not generate the anticipated income – have apparently come to pass.

Monica MacGuire, a friend who was at Porter’s bedside when she died at 1:30 a.m. on Monday at her home, said Porter was reading up on political doings until the end.

“I read the Leader to her,” MacGuire said. “I read her the story about the city [audit] on the front page. I knew exactly what she would say. All she did was snort at a very appropriate place to snort. It was funny.”

When MacGuire got to a section of one story that talked about property taxes being due on Oct. 31, Porter was concerned about whether she had paid them. She had.

However, according to MacGuire, Porter spent most of her last weekend in her hometown simply enjoying its beauty.

“Saturday was a beautiful, stunning day. The sunrise and the sunset were glorious. There was a sailboat on the water. She loved it.

“Port Townsend is Nora’s town,” said MacGuire. “She made it what it is today.”

A celebration of her life has yet to be planned, but MacGuire said it would happen one way or another, ideally at Fort Worden, which had been a focus of Porter's civic life. MacGuire suggested Fort Worden Commons would be an appropriate place to say farewell to Porter.

"If we rent it, we're not paying a damn dime for parking. That's what she'd say," said MacGuire.

A longtime smoker, Porter had lung cancer. Although she knew she was dying – she asked a reporter if an April 2011 story on her winning an award was her "obituary" – Porter remained, as she said, "hungry, worried, angry and determined," all words she used to describe herself when she was in her 20s and civil rights were on the nation's mind.

Her husband, Bob, 13 years her senior, died of prostate cancer in 1988, and after that, Porter ramped up her political life.

She met Lynn Kessler when the two were college trustees. They became friends, and Porter ended up running Kessler's office in Olympia, where she became a powerful advocate for positions the duo shared.

As for Port Townsend and staying here instead of leaving, she told the Leader in May, "It is the world for me. It is the world I can have the most effect in."

Nora Porter graduated from Washington State University in 1958 with a degree in communications.

She was an assistant manager for Chevy Chase Inn for four summers; worked as a teacher in the Port Townsend School District; was a teacher at the Fort Worden Diagnostic & Treatment Center for four years; owned the Quimper, a retail import store; was a buyer for Daubies; manager for Delmonico's; owner of the Porter Collection, a clothing store; a buyer for the Clothes Horse; and a consultant for Sir Plus before joining Rep. Lynn Kessler as an administrative assistant in 1992.

She was a trustee for Peninsula College, a member of the Port Townsend School Board, cofounder of the Port Townsend High School Scholarship Foundation, cofounder of the Port Townsend Foundation and president of the Port Townsend Chamber of Commerce.

She was in the 1982 electoral college, and was a member of the national, state and local Democratic Party for many years.

She was one of four authors of *City of Dreams, A Port Townsend Companion*, published in 1986.

Porter was born on Sept. 4, 1936 in Fort Lewis, Wash. She married Robert Porter, and the two made their home in Port Townsend.

Survivors include one son, Kyle, who lives in Amsterdam.

Appendix 2; Commission Policy 72-78-1

72-78-1 NAMING OF PARKS

In naming of sites, priority shall be given to geographic locations, historic significance or geologic features. Park sites may be named for a living person if the site has been donated by the individual. Where it is desirable to give recognition to a living person for their contribution to the State Park system, it is permissible to name for them individual natural or man-made features within a park. (CM Jan. 16, 1978, pp. 19-20)

