

Response to Questions on the FY 2017 Budget

Request By: Supervisor Gross and Supervisor McKay

Question: Please provide additional information on the inventory of County artifacts. Please include specifics on what the artifacts are, where they are currently stored and the condition of the buildings they are stored in. Also, what is their value and what is the criteria for accepting artifacts. What is the plan for managing this inventory?

Response: Archaeological artifacts are cultural materials recovered from the professional (scientific) archaeological excavations of prehistoric or historical archaeological sites. They are objects that are made or modified by humans. They are usually fragmentary in nature, thus the large inventory of 3 million artifacts.

There are two types of archeological artifacts in Fairfax County - American Indian and historic period artifacts. The American Indian artifacts include tools such as stone spear points; vessels such as ceramic or stone bowls; personal items such as smoking pipes or beads; or decorative arts such as effigies or sculptures. The historic period artifacts include tools such as knives and axes; weapons; glass, ceramic and metal vessels or objects; architectural artifacts such as nails and window glass; personal items such as buttons, pipes, and jewelry; decorative arts; and ceremonial objects.

Museum objects typically include furniture, artwork, housewares, decorative arts, and other items used to interpret the historic past in an exhibit. They are from a period of significance of a historic site being interpreted (for example, for Sully, artifacts are used to show what life was like in the 18th century and early 19th century).

Archaeological artifacts are stored at the James Lee Center. The conditions at the James Lee Center have been slightly improved. The museum objects and archeological artifacts have been re-housed in appropriate storage containers in accordance with best practices. The archaeological artifacts are now catalogued and inventoried using the Re-Discovery software that the agency has used for museum objects for years, improving information and control over documentation of these significant resources. Staff has implemented improved integrated pest management strategies and regularly monitors environmental conditions. Despite these improvements, the building is still deficient in accordance with museum industry standards and best practices. The building storage space is beyond capacity. In addition, there are multiple functions in the building, some of which are incompatible with collections, in that they compromise security and create pest issues. In the past, the collections space has suffered several floods due to aging piping associated with heating and cooling and with water infiltrating from the outside.

Museum collections are stored at the Walney Visitor Center and at the Ash Grove Historic Site. Conditions at the Walney Visitor Center have greatly improved after a number of changes were implemented, which were similar to the changes done at the James Lee Center. However, these conditions would still be considered deficient due to the historic building being beyond storage capacity. In addition, the numerous functions of the building compromise security and create pest issues. The conditions at the Ash

Grove Historic Site are seriously deficient, particularly environmental issues, pest issues and security.

There is no monetary value associated with archaeological or museum collections. They are considered to be priceless as they are irreplaceable and are held in trust by the Park Authority for the public to understand the history of Fairfax County. Their value is considered to be their research and interpretive value. The museum objects also do not have a monetary value.

Materials and objects of historic significance may be acquired through gift, purchase, bequest, exchange, transfer, field collection or other transactions whereby title of ownership is transferred to the Fairfax County Park Authority. Also, the Park Authority acts as a curatorial repository for archaeological material recovered from federal property in Fairfax County. Memoranda of Agreement are executed between the lead federal agency and the FCPA Cultural Resource Management Branch governing the terms of each collection and the responsibilities of the federal agency and the Cultural Resource Management Branch for the collection's on-going care. These items are held in trust by the Park Authority for the federal agency.

There is a specific set of criteria for which the Park Authority's curation staff acquire collections in accordance with Park Authority Policy (see attached):

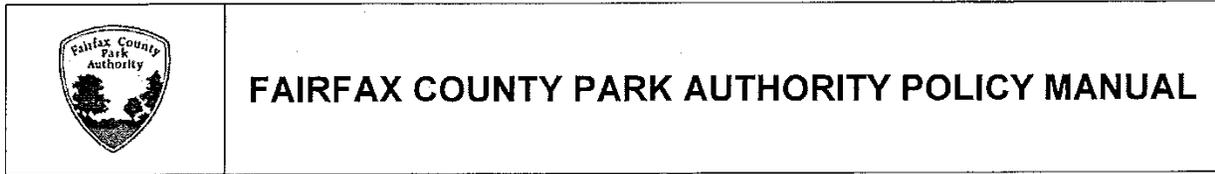
- Objects acquired must be consistent with the mission of the Museum and with the scope and uses of the collection.
- Objects that cannot be properly cared for and stored in existing facilities, or that are significantly deteriorated or unstable, shall not be accepted unless it is determined that the costs of storage and conservation are offset by the suitability and value of the object/s, or by a monetary donation, from the donor or a sponsor, that supports conservation and ongoing care. If an important object cannot be accommodated, the museum may assist the donor in finding a suitable repository.
- The donor or vendor must be able to prove their legal ownership of the object/s, and their right to donate or sell the object/s.
- The price of objects offered to the Museum for sale must be determined to be in accordance with fair market value at the time of purchase.
- Objects with an unethical history of ownership shall not be accepted, e.g. items that were stolen, collected without permission or authority, or imported or exported in contravention to existing laws.
- Objects of unknown or doubtful provenance shall not be accepted.
- Objects whose donors wish to impose unreasonable restrictions or conditions upon the acceptance or use of the object/s, such as requiring continuous exhibition, restricted rights to deaccession, or keeping of the object/s in a certain building or geographical location shall not be accepted. Exceptions to this rule may be made if justified by the particular significance of the collection, but all such exceptions must be approved by the Director of the Park Authority. Restrictions or conditions requiring expense must be fully funded by the donor as part of the gift. If the Museum accepts an object with conditions, these will be stated clearly on the Deed of Gift and become a part of the permanent record. The Museum also accepts thereby a legal and ethical obligation to comply with them.
- Copyrighted works may be accepted into the collection. If they are collected from the copyright holder, the Museum should attempt to obtain transfer of all rights. Should

this not be possible, then in addition to rights granted under current fair use laws, the museum should negotiate for limited rights including exhibition, reproduction for exhibit catalogues and publicity, and reproduction in scholarly publications and for educational use.

- Duplicates of items already in the collection shall not be accepted unless warranted by their superior condition, historical significance, or utility in exhibits, e.g. for rotation with sensitive objects.
- Acceptance of objects of significant monetary value should be carefully weighed against the ongoing costs of additional security, special storage facilities, and increased insurance. Acceptance of objects requiring expense above and beyond that normal for collections care and security must be approved by the Director of the Park Authority. If an important object cannot be accommodated, the Museum may assist the donor in finding a suitable repository.
- Objects which constitute hazards to the health and safety of museum staff and visitors, or which are hazardous to other collections items or to the facility, shall not be accepted unless the hazard can be mitigated easily without harm to the historical significance of the object.
- The Museum will not acquire human remains, nor objects subject to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).
- Objects of a controversial nature, or whose acceptance might be construed as commercial exploitation of the museum, will be evaluated, weighing potential damage to the Museum's standing in the community against the cultural significance of the object.
- In accordance with the provisions of the International Council of Museum's Convention of 1973, the Museum will not accept objects whose collection is believed to have involved destruction of historic sites, buildings, structures, habitats, and districts.

The plan for managing this inventory is to continue to follow the Park Authority's collections policy and investigate alternative locations that could appropriately house the collections and funding that can be used to improve current conditions.

Attachments: FCPA Policy 206



Policy 206	Title: Museum and Archaeological Collections
Date Approved: 3/9/16	Last reviewed: 6/26/2013
Objective:	Ensure the long-term protection, preservation and sustainability of natural, cultural and park resources in accordance with adopted park standards and adherence with natural and heritage resource management guidelines and Countywide Policy Plan obligations.

Purpose:

In support of our cultural resource stewardship mission, the Fairfax County Park Authority shall collect, preserve, exhibit, interpret and, where appropriate, make available for research, museum objects, archaeologically-derived artifacts, and other material culture.

Policy Statement:

1. The Park Authority shall ensure that collections under its stewardship are protected, secure, unencumbered, cared for, accounted for, and documented, and shall plan for their future needs and growth.
2. Acquisition, loan, deaccessioning and disposal activities shall be conducted in a manner that respects the protection and preservation of cultural resources and discourages and prevents illicit trade in such materials. Collections-related activities shall promote the public's understanding and appreciation for our past over financial gain.
3. The Park Authority shall subscribe to the American Association of Museums (AAM) "Code of Ethics for Museums" as it applies to museum collections, the Museum Collections Policy, and all collections management procedures.
4. The Park Authority shall maintain detailed guidelines and procedures for the management and care of the museum collections and archaeological collections in respective conformity to the professional standards established by the AAM and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) State Collections Management Standards, and shall revise those guidelines and procedures as needed to comply with current professional standards and guidelines. These are defined in Appendix 15: Guidelines for Living Collections Management: Museums and Archaeological Collections.

References:

1. VDHR Collections Management Standards
http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/pdf_files/Collections%20Mgmt%20Standards%2016june2011.pdf
2. Cultural Resource Management Plan
<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/gmp/crmpfinal.pdf>

Supporting Documentation:

1. Appendix 15: Guidelines for Living Collections Management: Museum and Archaeological Collections
(<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parkpolicy/park-policy-manual.pdf>)
2. Code of Ethics for Museums
<http://aam-us.org/resources/ethics-standards-and-best-practices/code-of-ethics>