
Flagpoles, patio at EP Veterans Memorial to be built soon

BY LYN JERDE - SUN NEWSPAPERS

(Created: Wednesday, September 19, 2007 10:48 PM CDT)

Come Veterans Day, the Eden Prairie residents who gather at Purgatory Creek Park - the future site of the city's Veterans Memorial - will have something to salute.

The Eden Prairie City Council learned Tuesday that a committee planning the memorial has enough money to construct the first phase, and to finish that phase in time for the Nov. 11 observance.

Included in the first phase is a small patio built out of paving bricks and a platform for three poles to display the U.S., Minnesota and Prisoners of War flags.

Parks and Recreation Director Jay Lotthammer said this phase will cost a little more than \$34,000, out of a total estimated cost of about \$300,000 for the entire project.

A council vote was not needed to proceed with the project.

Aside from setting apart some land at Purgatory Creek Park for the memorial, and paying for a design consultant last year, the city is not financially contributing to the memorial.

Donors are expected to pay the project's full cost.

John Mallo, who has spearheaded the project, said building the first phase is not considered a "groundbreaking."

However, by constructing part of the monument, it will become visible and tangible - possibly spurring donors to step up their gifts to the project, he said.

The schematic drawing for the memorial shows it consisting of two connecting circles - one representing war and the other representing peace.

Pillars representing the different branches of military service would surround one of the circles. Each circle would have a sculpture in the center, to be commissioned later.

Mallo said the \$50,000 gift to the project that Wal-Mart presented in October 2006 prompted committee members to think that corporate fundraising would be easy and quick.

However, Mallo said, fundraising also was going on at that time for the third sheet of indoor ice, now under construction at the Eden Prairie Community Center. Many corporations had already donated to that \$3 million project, he said, and they were reluctant to give to the memorial as well.

Individual donors have been generous, Mallo said.

And, Saturday's 5K run/walk for the memorial - the starting line for which was near where the memorial will be built - attracted 172 runners, including Mayor Phil Young.

Young, an avid marathon runner, placed fourth in his age group in the 5K race - out of the money for a medal.

However, at Tuesday's council meeting, Mallo presented Young with a medal that he said was for "the fastest elected official."

On Veterans Day, Mallo said, the community observance - at the site of the completed first phase of the memorial - will include a more solemn presentation, as three Eden Prairie veterans will be accorded special honors for their service.

Veterans Day will mark the first time that the flags will be raised at the memorial site.

"We want to show," Mallo said, "that we are serious about building this memorial."

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