

STARKE COUNTY VETERAN'S MEMORIAL PLAZA

Need for Project

The current monument, which sits on the southwest corner of the Court House lawn, was initially erected in the 1940's for casualties of WWII only. Later, an additional monument was placed at the site for the Korean War and another monument was subsequently placed for the Vietnam Conflict. Having run out of room, the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans were memorialized on the benches that had been placed between the three monuments.

There is no memorial for Starke County Veterans of other conflicts/wars since the establishment of the County in 1850. God forbid but in the event there are future conflicts, there is no room at the current site for memorializing those Veteran's either. Finally, the current Memorial is not handicap accessible. The new plaza will be larger and excavated to allow wheelchair access.

In communicating with various Starke County Veteran's groups, they are firm in their resolve that the existing monument must remain on the southwest corner of the Courthouse. The new Memorial will thus be built on the Southeast corner of the Courthouse Square.

We anticipate this plaza will be utilized by the public to sit, meditate, and reflect on the great sacrifices our service men and women have made to secure our freedoms. In the words of General John Pershing, "Time will not dim the glory of their deeds". Our new plaza will ensure just that!

Committee Members

- Robert Sims – Vietnam Veteran, County Council member, Commander VFW Post #748
- Mark Smith – Funeral Director, past President County Council, Experience with Veteran's Memorials
- Hunter Smith – Assistant Funeral Director
- Jeff Berg – Veteran, Knox City Council, Enthusiastic War and Veteran Historian
- Kathy Norem – County Commissioner experience bringing projects to fruition
- Jay Weinberg – Artistic Design
- Bryan Cavinder – County Commissioner experienced at community projects and provides continuity

Contributions to Date

- VFW Post #748, Knox, IN - \$57,000
- Territorial Engineering, Koontz Lake, IN – Will prepare site plan and specifications as their contribution

- James Hardesty Memorial Fund (a fund under the Northern Indiana Community Foundation, NICF) - \$28,500
- American Legion Post #131, Knox, IN - plan to purchase a granite bench for \$10,000.
- Starke County Historical Society and Genealogy Society – aiding with the identification of names for the monument.
- WKVI – a regular radio show to commence in March until Memorial Day (at least) dedicated to the effort to publicize the details of this project and encourage contributions.
- The City of Knox has committed to the replacement of the sidewalks that abut the Memorial. Since engineering services will be provided by Territorial and we are hopeful Ozinga will provide the concrete, this may mean only labor to install those sidewalks will be necessary.

The committee is in the process of conducting many meetings, public and private, with prospective donors to raise the necessary funds in a most expedient manner. Grant and other financial requests still under consideration include, NICF (additional funds requested, and presentation scheduled on March 4th), NIPSCO, Starke Hospital, Ozinga Concrete company, Bass Lake Property Owners, and KVREMC.

Commemorative granite bricks are also being sold. Two sizes are available - 4 X 9 paver is priced at \$150 and 8 X 9 is being sold for \$350. The larger paver can include a small logo.

Timeline

This project has already begun. We plan to break ground on Memorial Day and the project must be wrapped up in time for dedication ceremonies on Veteran's Day 2020. Although we are aware the schedule is aggressive, we believe it is very doable.

Budget

The quote for the monument that the committee selected is \$173,361.00. This includes material, lettering, carving, foundation plan, and installation. A copy of the quote is attached. A crane will be required to place the monument and we anticipate that being donated as an "in-kind" contribution by one of the County's bridge contractors. The contract requires a 1/3rd payment on May 1st, August 1st and the final 1/3rd at completion. We would like to raise some additional funds for contingencies. We are looking for a total of \$200,000 in cash contributions.

It is the intention of the committee that any left-over funds should be used to establish a permanently endowed fund, with the Northern Indiana Community Foundation, for the maintenance of both Veteran's Memorials. This would also allow Veteran's and their families to make donations to the preservation of the Memorial in the future.

A complete site plan with specifications will be needed. Bob Aloï, Territorial Engineering, has graciously agreed to provide that service as his donation.

Nathan Chambers, who has experience laying memorial pavers, has agreed to lay the pavers for this project as his contribution. We are pleased to have a young man like him making this donation!!

Excavation will be provided by either the County or donated from one of our vendors.

There will be a need for additional concrete, and we anticipate this will be donated by Ozinga. We have submitted a grant request for 250 cu yards of concrete. The value is somewhere between \$20,000 to \$25,000. We did receive a letter from Ozinga stating they will give us a 25% deduction on the cost of the concrete. We plan to ask them to reconsider at least a 50% discount. The remaining cost will need to be added to the cost of the project.

There will also be a need for flag poles and lighting, both of which we anticipate will be donated. If we are not able to find a donor, that will also need to be added to the cost of the project.