

# Proposed Vietnam Memorial

## Synopsis - City Council Discussion June 9<sup>th</sup> 2009

Subject: Proposed Vietnam Memorial. The Vietnamese Association of Wichita is attempting to have a new Vietnam Memorial constructed in Veterans Park, Wichita. We found out about their intention to vote on this subject last week and Terry Houck, Dennis Scuffham, Linda Kirby & John Wilson met with the Mayor of Wichita Carl Brewer and Councilmember for District II Sue Schlapp.

- The Park Commission outlined a brief history of the proposed Vietnam Memorial (PVM):
- Aug 2006 the Park Commission held a vote on the PVM. The vote was deferred for 30 days to allow more study and discussion on the PVM.
- Sept 2006 the Park Commission again heard discussion on the PVM and voted 7-0 in favor of building the PVM and recommended the proposal to the City.
- In the ensuing 3 years the Vietnamese Association and the City worked on the design of the PVM.
- The Mayor opened the floor for discussion by the public and allowed 2.5 minutes per person to express their views.
- Around 10 to 12 people spoke for each side for a little over an hour.
- On our side; Dennis Scuffham, Terry Houck & John Wilson spoke reasonably well and made some good points in the time allotted to us. Linda Kirby made our closing for us and gave an excellent speech highlighting our key points in the time allotted to her.
- Most of the pro-PVM speakers (that I could understand) spoke about honoring the South Vietnamese military for their sacrifices to the South Vietnamese people.
- Key points against allowing the PVM as proposed:
  1. We already have a Vietnam War Memorial in Veterans Park.
  2. We feel that Veterans Park should only include memorials honoring personnel of the United States armed forces.
  3. Statements made by a city councilmember to the news media previously were erroneous in that the Korean War Memorial **DOES NOT** contain any wording honoring anyone other than United States military forces.
  4. Statements made by a city councilmember to the news media stating that we already have flags of allied forces flying at Veterans Park and so precedent has already been set to allow memorials of allied forces were debunked by pointing out that the flags of the foreign countries are pennants of countries where our servicemen have fought and gave their lives in defense of another country or people and are not memorials for the allied country.

The City Council vote 7-0 to defer the vote for 30 days and the Mayor appointed (I forget. I'm writing this from memory.) someone on staff to be the Point of Contact between the City, Us & the Vietnamese and suggested that we try to settle or compromise our views on the PVM between us before the next City Council vote on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

## News Media Coverage Synopsis

As usual most of the media focused on one persons angry comments to the city council instead of focusing on our key points.

All three television networks and the Wichita Eagle gave the subject coverage. In my opinion the Wichita Eagle gave the most fair and balanced report. Of the TV news services KSN was the best.

Several comments were posted on the KSN, KAKE & KWCH web sites from misinformed people calling us among other things "Klu Klux Klan", racists and other things. I posted the following in response:

I spoke against allowing the new memorial to be constructed in Veterans Park. The people who are leaving the comments here in favor of the new memorial don't seem to understand our position on this at all.

We did not present a "Klu Klux Klan" attitude nor are we "bigots". It does not have anything at all to do with race, religion or the bravery and sacrifices of the South Vietnamese military.

Our whole position is basically:

1. This is the United States. Memorials placed in Veterans Park are there to honor the sacrifices of the men and women who were in service of the United States. It is not a place to honor the people in service to a foreign government.
2. We already have a memorial for the Vietnam War in Veterans Park.
3. If someone wants to fund and construct a memorial honoring anyone else that did NOT sign an oath to the United States and were not in service to the United States then they should seek permission to build the memorial in a location other than Veterans Park. They may be US citizens and a viable part of our community NOW but at the period of time in question they were NOT.
4. If we are to allow memorials to be placed in Veterans Park honoring any of the people who we attempted to help or were our allies in any of the wars we have fought it will set a bad precedent. Some of our allies in conflicts have been; China, Russia, French, England, Australia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, most of Central America, much of South America, India, much of the Far East and basically most of the entire world. That is why Veterans Park and other Memorial Parks dedicated to the memory and sacrifices of the US Military should be reserved for the people who actually served in the US Military. To allow anything else denigrates the sacrifices of the US Military that Veterans Park was constructed to honor.

KSN posted my comments in their entirety. KAKE edited my comments substantially and removed the first two paragraphs which effectively removed my rebuttal to us being called a bigot or racist. I don't know what happened to KWCH.