

July 14, 2009

My name is John Wilson. I am a U.S. Army Veteran of the Vietnam Era. I am a local member of both the American Legion and V.F.W. and a charter member of the Patriot Guard.

Petition to Enact Rules & Regulations Governing Veterans Memorial Park

I am here today to ask the Wichita City Council to consider enacting a set of rules and regulations to govern the John S. Stevens Veterans Memorial Park and to further issue a proclamation declaring that the purpose of the John S. Stevens Veterans Memorial Park is to memorialize the efforts and sacrifices of the United States Armed Forces in this country's wars and conflicts.

The John Stevens Veterans Memorial Park was conceived as a park to honor American Veterans. The Wichita Eagle of November 12, 1977 reported the dedication as follows, and I quote "Today's dedication of John S. Stevens Veterans Memorial Park at 2nd and Greenway again gives Wichita a public facility honoring those who have served in this country's wars. Now a riverfront plaza will serve as a reminder of Wichitan's efforts and sacrifices in their country's military service..." end quote.

In my recent research into other Veterans Memorial Parks located in cities across the United States I have found that all of them that had a website listing a set of rules and requirements governing the construction of new memorials or the addition of names on an existing memorial required that the people being memorialized must have served in the United States Armed Forces during specific dates such as the dates used by many Veterans Organizations uses to establish membership eligibility.

From the City of Wichita's website I quote "Dedicated in 1977, this memorial is named after the late City Commissioner John S. Stevens and was a joint project between the City, Urban Renewal Agency and several veterans groups." Clearly the area veterans organizations had a part in the planning and construction of the John S. Stevens Veterans Memorial Park and I ask that this Council appoint a commission that includes members of local veterans organizations to serve as advisors on issues concerning the John S. Stevens Veterans Memorial Park.

America and indeed much of the world enjoy much of their freedom to the efforts, sacrifices, blood, tears and even the death of members of the United States Armed Forces. Men like these two wounded Iraqi Veterans standing behind me. Less than 5% of America's population have served in the United States Armed Forces. In every school, job or endeavor, the top 5% is considered to be exceptional and so are the men and women in our Armed Forces who voluntarily go into harms way to protect America's interests. These men and women come from all walks of life and are of every color, race, creed, religion and countries and deserve to have a special place to honor their sacrifice.

Thank you for you time to allow me to address this issue.

John Wilson, KSVAC