

July 13, 2009

Mr. Mayor and the Wichita City Council

My name is Herb Duncan, 814 N. Colorado, Wichita, KS 67212.

I would like to share my thoughts on the VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK issue.

I'm sure you are taking a lot of flack over this but I feel you folks, city government, are taking the wrong course of action when it comes to the location of the South Vietnamese Soldier Memorial.

I feel that is the real issue...*where to put the South Vietnamese Soldier Memorial.*

There is a limited amount of land in the Veterans Memorial Park. I would like to see that land reserved and set aside for the future construction of memorials to the men and women who fought and died serving in the United States Armed Forces

American Veteran Memorials should have priority when it comes to the Veterans Memorial Park.

We have memorials waiting to be built for those who served in World War I, World War II, Panama, Grenada, Bosnia, First Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan and others to come.

I hurt when I listen to a Gold Star Mother ask, will there be enough room in the park to build a memorial so that her son would be remembered?

The Memorial Park was conceived as a park to honor Veterans of the United States Armed Forces. It should be a constant reminder to the citizens of Wichita and the many visitors that come to tour the park daily of the efforts and sacrifices of the men and women who paid the price for our freedom.

FREEDOM IS NOT FREE.... it is paid for with the blood, the loss of life and limb of our American Veteran.

I am confident there are other good locations in the city of Wichita for the South Vietnamese Soldier Memorial. I believe if you ask most Veterans they would agree that they understand why they want to build their memorial and with the same breath they would say... not in the VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK.

The final decision will ultimately rest with you, our city government. I would like to request that you give consideration to what I have said and VOTE NOT to allow the construction of the South Vietnamese Soldier Memorial in or close to the VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK.

Thank you,
Herb Duncan - USN War Veteran
Wichita, Kansas Citizen

The following is a response from Janet Miller. She is still repeating the same points as she has from the beginning of this issue and which we have several times pointed out are in error but she persists. John Wilson

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Miller, Janet L** <JLMiller@wichita.gov>

Date: Mon, Jul 13, 2009 at 10:20 AM

Subject: RE: Request

Mr. Duncan –

Thank you for taking the time to write concerning the new Vietnam Veterans' Memorial. While you and I disagree on this issue, I respect your right to hold a different opinion and appreciate you taking the time to share it.

I share your gratitude for our veterans and understand that our freedoms in this country exist largely because of our veterans' willingness to serve in our armed forces and to give their lives for the cause of democracy around the world. Veterans' Park in Wichita recognizes the countless men and women who have courageously served our country and given their very lives to this endeavor. I am humbled by their selflessness and bravery. Today, there are some 8,000 (This number is always used however the 2004 hellowichita.com census shows 6,859 or 2% of the population) Americans of Vietnamese origin who now live in Wichita, a number of whom are veterans of the Vietnam War. These veterans fought alongside our American troops to save their country from the aggression of the North Vietnamese. Following the demise of their homeland, they came to America where they became American citizens, started businesses, paid taxes, had families, and in some cases watched their own children go off to serve in the United States military. (Their children who have served or are serving in the United States Military have earned the right to be memorialized for their service to the United States.)

These American citizens deserve a place where they can honor their veterans and those veterans of the U.S. military who fought bravely on their behalf. They yearn for a place where they can memorialize the 58,000 American soldiers who gave their lives for the cause of freedom in the Republic of Vietnam and simultaneously honor the Vietnamese soldiers who lost their lives alongside them. They wish to express their appreciation to U.S. veterans and to the United States. (This is fine as long as the memorial in question is not erected in Veterans Memorial Park. They haven't earned that right.)

I have attached for your review the text of the plaque that will be placed at the memorial. Above the memorial will fly the American flag (on the left) and the flag of the former Republic of Vietnam. A sculpture in the center of the memorial will feature an American and South Vietnam soldier together. A ceremonial urn, used for burning incense in memory of lost veterans, will also be incorporated into the memorial.

There has been some inaccurate information circulated about Veterans' Park in Wichita, which I would like to clarify. While there are claims that the park is only for and by veterans of branches of the U.S. military, there is no such documentation, (there should

be) and there are other types of memorials already there (No, there isn't). There are memorials to the volunteer Merchant Marines (Veterans as decreed by the President for their service during WWII by serving in war zones.) and from the Gold Star Mothers and Gold Star Families (the Gold Star Mothers and Gold Star Families exist because they have lost family members who were serving in the United States Military). Issue has also been taken with regard to other country's flags flying in the park. In fact, other flags already fly in the park, including the flag of the former Republic of Vietnam, Korea, France, and Great Britain (then flags of Vietnam & Korea are there because we fought on their soil and died there. The flags of France & England are at the flag pavilion in the history of flags because at one time lands in American were once owned by these countries.) .

Some have criticized the "Vietnamese" nature of the new memorial. Yet, the beautiful Korean War Memorial dedicated in 2001 in the park features an archway reflecting Korean culture, flies the Korean flag, includes a large 3 x 4 ft plaque with text from the Korean Community Association (part of it written in Korean), and lists the number of Korean soldiers, civilians, and other allies lost in that war. (The flag is there because we bled and died there. So what if it lists the numbers of dead who died there? Those are historical facts. The memorial or plaque DOES NOT pay homage to anyone or foreign power by only to 'the American Heroes'.)

The new memorial recognizes and memorializes veterans of the Vietnam War and has a rightful place in Veterans' Park (We already have a Vietnam Memorial in the park. It has been there since 1991). The funds for the memorial are being privately raised by American citizens whose taxes help pay for the regular upkeep of the park grounds. (All the memorials and maintenance of the memorials in the park were paid for by Veterans, the city only mows the grass.) Suggesting the memorial be located in "another part of town," perhaps where a greater concentration of Vietnamese Americans live, harkens back to the days of "separate but equal," which our country rejected long ago. (We don't care where it is located as long as it is not in Veterans Memorial Park; they haven't earned the right to install a memorial there. There is that racial slur again. Because our duty compels us to protect the memory of our fallen and the other party is another color we must be racist. And to be fair Veterans are special, only 5% of the population are Veterans that the other 95% benefit from. Coming to American does not guarantee equality but the chance to be equal, the equalizer to install a memorial in this park is to serve in the United States Military.)

When the park reaches its maximum capacity of memorials, the City will need to establish Veterans' Memorial Park II, where additional memorials may be installed. There was discussion of this very issue during the recent parks master planning process. The new Vietnam War memorial will be an appropriate addition to the park, memorializing U.S. veterans and the Vietnamese veterans who fought and died alongside them. I've heard from many people, including veterans, who support the memorial, and I plan to as well. (I've heard from many people including private citizens who do not support the new memorial in Veterans Memorial Park. Hey you want to plan a new park? Great put the new memorial there and call it something else because if you continue to try

to force your personal will on the Veteran community good luck finding anymore of us that will take the time or spend the money installing any more Veteran Memorials knowing we have no say in our own park.)

Janet
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(Edited and errors pointed out by John Wilson)