

TOWN OF WEST SENECA



SHEILA M. MEEGAN
TOWN SUPERVISOR

To: Fellow Town Board Members

From: Sheila M. Meegan, Town Supervisor

Date: April 6, 2015

Re: Proposal to Create Community Flower Gardens at Walkway of Freedom

Kindly accept the attached proposal to create community flower gardens at the Town of West Seneca Walkway of Freedom.

APR 06 2015

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OBJECTIVE:

Create Community Flower Gardens at the Town of West Seneca **Walkway of Freedom**

BACKGROUND:

In June 2010, the West Seneca Town Board authorized the name of Centennial Park to be changed to the Veterans Memorial Park. The official dedication of the Veterans Memorial Park was held on Veterans Day, November 11, 2010.

Shortly after the dedication, the idea of creating a *walkway* featuring bricks containing the names of veterans was approved by the Veterans Committee. The walkway would be called the **Walkway of Freedom**. The purpose of the Walkway was to create a permanent park-like setting dedicated to all veterans who served in the United States Armed Forces. A park where residents and visitors may visit to honor and reflect on the sacrifices made by their loved ones and all veterans who fought in defense of this nation. The Walkway is a place for future generations to contemplate the sacrifices made by the generations who came before them to obtain and preserve the freedoms we enjoy today in our great country.

Since 2011, there have been five (5) offerings for individuals and organizations to purchase bricks for placement in the Walkway to honor all veterans. To date, there are over 1,600 bricks in the **Walkway of Freedom** and its companion Pathways that honor the veterans who have served the United States by giving their time and, some ultimately, their lives in military service to their country.

ORGANIZATION

The **Walkway of Freedom** and its associated Pathways are maintained by the West Seneca Joint Veterans Committee. The committee is made up of members from the veteran's organizations that serve the Town of West Seneca. Organizations that are part of the Joint Veterans Committee include: American Legion Post 735; Veterans of Foreign Wars, VFW Post 8113; Veterans of Foreign Wars, Harvey D. Morin, VFW Post 2940; Marine Corps. League Detachment 239; Navy Seabee Veterans of America, Island X-5; AMVETS Post 8113; and the 82nd Airborne.

Each organization provides delegates to serve on the Joint Veterans Committee. A new chairman of the committee is named each year, based on a rotation between the seven organizations.

The Joint Veterans Committee named James E. Manley to serve as the overseer of the **Walkway of Freedom** to plan and execute expansion plans for the Walkway

WALKWAY EXPANSION 2011 – 2014

- **Benches** – In 2011, American Legion Post 735 and the Sons of the American Legion each donated a six-foot bench to be installed at the Walkway. The benches have cedar-colored backs and seats with a black frame and are constructed from maintenance-free, recycled material. In 2012, an additional four benches were added, with bench purchases by VFW 8113, AMVETS 8113, Marine Corp. League and the Seabees. Benches were also purchased by VFW 2940 and the West Seneca veterans Committee, with installation scheduled for the fall of 2014. (*Attachment 1*)
- **Flower Boxes** – In 2012, four (4) flower boxes were placed along the **Walkway of Freedom**. The purpose of the flower boxes was to create a green space, for flowers and plants, within a limited area and to enhance the visual aspect of the Walkway
- **Gatling Gun** – In 1922, a Model 1897 Gatling Gun was donated to the Town of West Seneca by the Town Supervisor, Henry C. Lein. After years of neglect, the Gatling Gun was restored in 2003 and stored in the Town's Highway Garage. As a commitment to honor our veterans, the Gatling Gun was moved in 2012 to a concrete pad in Veterans Memorial Park, creating a permanent home for this historical piece of military armament.
- **Gazebo** – In April, 2013, a 10 foot x 10 foot gazebo, featuring a two tier roof and two benches, was constructed immediately east of the **Walkway of Freedom**. Individual bricks leading from the Walkway to the Gazebo contain the following: *Honor, Courage, Strength, and Country.* (*Attachment 2*)
- **Pathways** – In 2013, to accommodate additional veteran's bricks, three (3) new pathways were added onto the **Walkway of Freedom**. (Path of Glory, Path of Honor and Path of Courage) These paths run east to the sidewalk along Union Road, north to the Gatling Gun and south to the proposed obsolete military hardware exhibit. The Pathways were initially filled with beige blank bricks, outlined in red bricks. As engraved bricks are purchased and additional space is required, the blank beige bricks will be removed and replaced with the engraved ones. Pathway designation signs were also added in 2014. (*Attachment 3*)
- **Bricks** - Since 2011, the opportunity to purchase bricks (pavers) to honor our veterans has been made available to the public. From the period 2011-2012, the original area designated as the **Walkway of Freedom** was completely filled with 4 x 8 inch engraved bricks. In 2013-2014, bricks bearing the names of veteran's have filled the Path of Glory and engraved bricks have been added to the Path of Courage. In October 2014, a sixth brick offering will allow additional bricks to be added to the Path of Courage.

An 8-inch x 8-inch brick has also been offered to organizations and companies that would like to honor our veterans. This bricks cost significantly more that the individual veterans bricks, but there is four lines of information available. Space is still available in the Walkway for additional company/organization bricks.

- **Learning Stations** – Signs will be placed along the paths which will describe the major wars that the United States has been involved. A short description of the war (reason, location(s), dates, etc.) will be displayed as well as the causality figures. This will be an excellent opportunity to educate our younger residents about our American history and the role that our military has played. As of September 2014, the signs have been created, but awaiting the completion of the sign posts. *(Attachment 4)*
- **Obsolete Military Hardware** – The Town of West Seneca and the West Seneca Veterans Committee have petitioned the Department of Army for an obsolete piece of military hardware to place on display at Veterans Memorial Park. With the grateful assistance of Congressman Brian Higgins, our request has been accepted and we have now been placed on a waiting list. Once we are notified that military hardware is available, a concrete pad will be placed to accommodate the Army donation.

WALKWAY COSTS

The creation and ongoing expansion of the **Walkway of Freedom** and its associate projects has been a mutual collaboration between the Town of West Seneca and the West Seneca Joint Veterans Committee.

- The Town of West Seneca has supplied in-kind services such as concrete pads, flag poles, Veterans Park sign, Gatling Gun and flowers.
- The West Seneca Joint Veterans Committee has paid for the creation of the **Walkway of Freedom**, gazebo and its associated pathways.
- Individual organizations have paid for benches that have been placed around the Walkway.
- Volunteers have planted flowers and provided weed control around the Walkway, Vietnam Memorial and the Veterans Park sign.

FUNDRAISING

The West Seneca Joint Veterans Committee, after some early organizational donations, has relied on funds raised through the offerings of engraved bricks that individuals and organizations purchase to be placed in the Walkway. The Committee also sold commemorative shirts, which yielded a small profit. The Committee has no other source of income.

PROPOSAL

Create a Community Flower Garden where community organizations, companies or individuals *adopt* a section of land to plant and maintain flowers and greenery alongside the existing Pathways in the **Walkway of Freedom**. The results benefit the entire community. (*Attachment 5*)

Mission Statement

The mission of the West Seneca **Walkway of Freedom** Community Flower Garden is to provide the resources and network opportunities to promote the love of gardening, floral and landscape design, and environmental responsibility. The result is a beautiful, natural space that is enjoyed by all residents.

What is a Community Flower Garden?

A Community Flower Garden is organizations or residents who plant and grow flowers for beautification.

The Goals of the Walkway of Freedom Community Flower Garden:

- To create a beautiful green, flowery space for all to enjoy
- To create connection between the community and the land
- To educate and expand knowledge about flowers and greenery
- Natural environments and organic practices
- Community building

Creating a Community Garden

Community Flower Gardens grow in many forms, limited only by the imagination and the resources of the community. The main purpose of a Community Flower Garden is to provide a gathering point for cooperative activity and civic improvement.

Proposed Project Points

- The West Seneca Joint Veterans Committee proposes that the land strips adjacent to the three (3) pathways at the **Walkway of Freedom** be utilized to plant flowers to beautify the area between Town Hall and the West Seneca Library.
- The strips of land, measuring four (4) foot wide and running the length on both sides of each pathway will be prepared for flower and greenery planting. The top layer of grass will have to be removed and the underlying soil tilled. Soil, with aged compost or manure to improve its fertility and increase its organic matter content, be added to create a bed suitable for planting.

- The Town of West Seneca and the West Seneca Joint Veterans will work in collaboration to find companies, community organizations or individuals who wish to “adopt” a plot of land to raise and maintain flowers.
- Companies, Organizations or individuals that are interested in “adopting” a Flower Garden would receive a 4-foot x 10-foot section of land (flower bed) adjacent to a pathway.
- The company, organization or individual that “adopts” a flower bed is responsible for the planting, weeding and general care to keep their garden looking attractive throughout the growing season.
- The choice of what to plant rests with the company, organization or individual that “adopts” a flower bed, as long as flowers or greenery to be planted are not illegal or hazardous to other plants. No trees or shrubs.
- Ornaments, fencing, or any other decorative item must be approved by the West Seneca Joint Veterans Committee prior to being placed in a flower bed.
- The West Seneca Joint Veterans Committee will supply a small sign designating a flower bed as “adopted” by an organization, company or individual.
- A company, organization or individual may request the same flower bed for the next growing season. They may “adopt” more than one flower bed, depending on availability.
- Any company, organization or individual that does not exercise proper maintenance of their flower bed, will be notified by the West Seneca Joint Veterans Committee, in writing, to maintain its flower bed in accordance with the initial agreement. If the company, organization or individual fails to respond to the written notice, the sign identifying the company, organization or individual will be removed and the flower bed offered up for “adoption”.
- At the end of the growing season, all annual will be removed from the flower beds. Perennial flowers may remain for the next growing season.

BENEFITS

The development of a Community Flower Garden is consistent with the goals of the West Seneca Comprehensive Plan. Some of the recommendations that were specified in the adopted 2006 Plan:

- One of the major objectives of the Comprehensive Plan was to establish the Area Surrounding Town Hall into a Stronger “Town Center”.

- *Improve the aesthetics of the Union Road corridor with improvements such as more landscaping.*
The creation of a Community Flower Garden fits that criterion, helping to improve the aesthetics along Union Road.
 - *Recognize the value and importance of street trees, landscaping and public spaces in defining community character.*
The addition of a Community Flower Garden will help define our community's character by providing a safe, attractive area for visitors.
 - *Strengthen the "image" of the Town through higher standards of maintenance and aesthetic improvements at strategic areas, particularly at highly visible areas within Town.*
The Walkway of Freedom is a highly visible area, known to the majority of residents and draws visitors each day. It is also the focal point for the Town's Memorial Day and Veterans Day Ceremonies.
 - *Make the area more walkable and pedestrian friendly.*
Creating a quiet green space, residents have the opportunity to take a casual stroll through the grounds of the **Walkway of Freedom** to honor our veterans, take advantage of the benches to rest and reflect, and with a Community Flower Garden, to walk among and take pleasure in the planted flowers and greenery.
- Other benefits include:
 - Town beautification project with minimal cost to the Town.
 - An opportunity for volunteer groups to get involved in our Community.
 - Through Corporate and organizational sponsorships, a Community Flower Garden project will help bring people and different organizations together.
 - A Community Flower Garden will help beautify the Town Hall - West Seneca Library corridor and flower gardening conserves the soil, protects the environment and works with nature rather than against it.
 - While Town Hall does not have a physical "front porch" where people can gather to enjoy nature, the lack of a front porch shouldn't inhibit the development of a front porch culture. An alternative outdoor space would be a Town Community Flower Garden. Much like a front porch, a garden welcomes us into a relaxed, fresh air setting and encourages curiosity among passersby, strengthening community ties.
 - We all love flowers, they decorate our life; make it more colored and bright.

HOW GARDENS ARE MAINTAINED

Each garden is to be maintained by the company, organization or individual adopting the flower bed. All volunteers are welcome throughout the summer to help care for the gardens and provide extra care through weeding and other maintenance. This would be an excellent opportunity for school students to receive credit for community service.

The watering of the flower beds would be the responsibility of the Town's Building and grounds Department and would be on a "need" basis.

PROJECT COSTS

While the West Seneca Joint Veterans Committee will contribute as much monetarily as its budget will allow, the Committee looks to the Town of West Seneca to provide in-kind services.

- Joint Veterans Committee will provide all adopted flower bed identification signs.
- Joint Veterans Committee will plant decorative bushes around Learning Stations.\
- Joint Veterans Committee will conduct mailings to make organizations and businesses aware of the Community Flower Garden and solicit interest in "adopting" a garden. Members of the Town Board may solicit interest from the community organizations in which they are involved.
- The Town of West Seneca will prepare the flower beds by removing grass layer.
- Cost of suitable topsoil will be determined at a later date.

CONCLUSION

The partnership between the West Seneca Joint Veterans Committee and the Town of West Seneca to create a Community Flower Garden will help generate stronger community involvement that will beautify the Town Hall – West Seneca Library corridor. A completed project will feature a park-like atmosphere around the **Walkway of Freedom**, featuring benches, bushes and flower gardens, providing a friendly, walking environment that all West Seneca can take pride in and enjoy. (*Attachment 6*)