

## **Collegedale Veterans Plan Memorial Park**

by Rob York

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A park designed to commemorate the veterans of America's armed forces is being planned in the city of Collegedale.

The non-profit project would include, among other things, a timeline of all wars fought on foreign soil in America's history, plus military equipment such as tanks and helicopters that are now obsolete and have been disarmed.

The idea for the Veterans Memorial Park was borne in a meeting of the Collegedale Veterans of Foreign Wars, according to Phil Garver of Collegedale.

Garver is a member of the Veterans Memorial Park Steering Committee. Garver spent two years serving in the Vietnam War after being drafted by the US Army at the age of 20.

"The concept that freedom is not free is what we're trying to promote. We're just trying to honor our veterans and say 'Thank you,'" Garver said.

On Monday, June 4, in a meeting of the Collegedale City Commission, Garver and fellow Steering Committee member Matthew Miller made an appearance. Garver and Miller asked for the commission to endorse the project and for a \$5,000 donation to cover the cost of seed so that the project may begin.

Garver said that the purpose for asking for the commission's endorsement was for two reasons. "It says that they want it to be part of Collegedale," Garver said. Also, city approval is necessary before the military can give the park the equipment wanted for show.

Pending additional inquiry, commission members approved of the endorsement and the donation.

Commission members at the meeting expressed positive feelings about the project. Commission member Chuck Whidden said that he feels the project would "bring good business into the city of Collegedale." Vice-Mayor Jimmy Eller expressed the desire to "bring credibility" to the project by endorsing it.

Commission member Jim Ashlock, himself a Korean War Veteran, said that he had some doubts about the project at first. "At first I was a little dubious that this was just a Collegedale veterans thing. But it's a memorial for all veterans, it just happens to be located in Collegedale. People from Chattanooga, Cleveland, and the surrounding area can all come visit this memorial," Ashlock said.

As far as what the memorial may do for the Collegedale community, Ashlock said he thinks it will bring some business into the city, and will allow children from various schools to come visit for history classes. Ashlock stressed that the memorial's greatest impact will be symbolic. "These men fought and died for us," Ashlock said. "We're trying to recreate a little of that aura."

Garver hopes that the project will be finished by early next May, before Memorial Day. "Next, we have to finalize arrangements for rendering, or an architect's drawing, then we can go to corporations for donations."