

Item 25-0654: Resolution #4-R-25 Rename Appleton Memorial Park to Veteran's Memorial Park

Common Council

Wed, Jun 18, 2025 7:00PM

Mayor Jake Woodford 14:58

I have no business to present to you this evening, so we'll move on to public participation. We have four members of the public signed up to speak. At each meeting of the Common Council, the Council allocates a total of 30 minutes for members of the public to share their views on items which appear on the agenda. We ask that participants keep their comments to five minutes or less. We'll help you keep track of time, and I'll ask that when you—when I call you up, you state your name and address and the item you'd like to speak on before you begin your comments. And with that, we'll begin. Jack Voigt is first.

Jack Voigt 15:38

Good evening. Good evening, alderpersons. Before you this evening is a very important resolution to rename Appleton Memorial Park to Veterans Memorial Park. Hello. I'm Jack Voigt, and I like to support this resolution for a number of reasons without any reservations. Like you I served on the city council as an alderman, alderperson for 10 years.

Jack Voigt 16:09

The definition of the word veteran in the dictionary states "one who has been a member of the armed forces." I'm a US Army Vietnam veteran. I was drafted and sent to Vietnam. I took an oath to defend all persons in our great state and country, United States of America, regardless of religion, regardless of race, regardless of politics, etc. The word veteran transcends—transcends everything, such as religion, race, politics and viewpoints. You'll be honoring men and women who have served and are currently serving our country today in the armed forces of America.

Jack Voigt 17:07

I would like to mention to you, some 40 years ago, as an alderperson of the 17th Ward, I submitted a resolution to rename the current park area of Veterans Park, which I believe it was, I thought was Citizens Park, but I guess it was a different name, but that's here nor there. I asked it to be named Veterans park, and it was approved by the city council without any real controversy. Since that time, there have been no major improvements to make it a real Veterans Park in Appleton. The mayor and the Park and Rec Department believe there are many—there are too many limitations to improve the current site to honor veterans.

Jack Voigt 18:01

Many communities in our state and nation take pride to have a designated veterans park in their community. If you visit Milwaukee or La Crosse, they honor veterans honorably. These parks hold many events without prejudice towards others, or groups, individuals. I believe our city has the same policy as well. Every person will continue to enjoy this new naming of the park. Our country is a melting pot of immigrants, and many of them we're proud to serve and also die for our country. We need to honor them and our city as well. Many of you know of a veteran, and they would be proud of your support this evening to rename Appleton Memorial Park to Veterans Memorial Park.

Jack Voigt 18:59

In closing, there's a saying that a Marine is always a Marine. I say a veteran is always a veteran as well. And I thank you for listening. I thank you for serving the city of Appleton as well as your aldermanic District. Thank you, this evening.

Mayor Jake Woodford 19:21

Next is Wayne Martin.

Wayne Martin (Appleton VFW Post Commander) 19:32

Mr. Mayor and alderpersons of Appleton Common Council, thank you for giving me a couple of minutes here this evening. My name is Wayne Martin. I'm a citizen of Appleton. My wife and I reside on at [XXXXXX]. I am also—I'm also the VFW commander of our VFW Post in—here in Appleton. For those of you folks that don't know, our Appleton post is now 93 years old. We just celebrated the auxiliary as being 90 years old as being an auxiliary, and we are all very proud of that.

Wayne Martin (Appleton VFW Post Commander) 20:27

I'm a Marine Corps veteran. I served in Vietnam from 1969 till 1970. I was awarded the Purple Heart and achievement—Navy Achievement Medal. I support all veterans and everything that they try to accomplish. I would like to see the Appleton Memorial Park renamed to the Veterans Memorial Park. Our VFW Post 2778 supports this 100%. This would be a great endeavor for all veterans, something that they could go and visit and see all it—all the time. So, thank you for your time.

Mayor Jake Woodford 21:28

Next is Michael Weaver.

Michael Weaver (Vietnam Veterans Appleton Chapter Chaplain) 21:35

Good evening. My name is Michael Weaver. I reside in Kaukauna. I'm the commander of the VFW post there and chaplain of the Vietnam Veterans Chapter here in Appleton, and I would certainly appreciate your support, your consideration and affirmation of renaming the Memorial Park to Veterans Memorial Park, and our VFW Post, as well as the Vietnam chapter, is wholeheartedly behind this effort as well.

Michael Weaver (Vietnam Veterans Appleton Chapter Chaplain) 22:09

Since 1775 over 1 million Americans have paid the ultimate price to protect this country, to support the Constitution, and to follow the orders of the President of the United States, and to defend it against all enemies, foreign and domestic. We do not take our service lightly. I served as an Army medic in Vietnam in 1968-69 and saw many pay that price. It is deeply important that traditions and recognition and honor and respect be forwarded to all veterans past and present, and by renaming this park you will go forward in doing exactly that.

Michael Weaver (Vietnam Veterans Appleton Chapter Chaplain) 22:59

There are many veterans parks throughout the state. Kaukauna has one named the Ring of Honor. We hold all of our Memorial and Veterans Day and other ceremonies there. Chilton has a Veterans Park. Menasha has the Isle of Valor. Little Chute has a Veterans Park. Vet's Village here in Appleton, right near Fox Valley Tech, has an absolutely beautiful Memorial and designated area right next to it. And the premier one in the state is at Neillsville, called the High Ground. If you've never been to any of those, you need to attend. Thank you very much for listening. Thank you for your support.

Mayor Jake Woodford 23:52

Next is Tim Cody.

Tim Cody (Fox Valley Veterans Council - President) 23:57

Good evening, Mayor, alderpersons. Thank you so much for giving me this time to talk. I'm kind of new to this area. I moved here in 2016 after retiring after 28 years in the military, and I absolutely love it. You have created one of the greatest communities I've ever lived in, and I've lived all over the world and all over the United States. So, I applaud you for that.

Tim Cody (Fox Valley Veterans Council - President) 24:25

I have had the significant privilege of actually speaking for the city of Appleton during Veterans Day by the invitation of Mayor Woodford, and it was a great honor. But as you know, when I spoke at Veterans Park several times, it lacks; it really lacks what's needed for that event. I sat there with a few televisions—a two—few TV cameras, a few VIPs, and two cars in the two-car parking lot, and that's all that was available. And though we've now moved that ceremony to Memorial Park—I worked right next to Memorial Park before I became the president of the Fox Valley Veterans Council. And some people I've heard say, "Well, it's already named Memorial Park." Yeah, it's named "Memorial" Park. At no time was there any indication, or did I ever believe, as a newcomer, that this was dedicated to veterans. I think putting that name in the front of that makes it very clear. It is a great location. It is a location where veterans can gather through the city to honor themselves and for the city to honor them. And I know of no other location to do that.

Tim Cody (Fox Valley Veterans Council - President) 25:46

Unfortunately, we do have a history of our spaces being taken up by progress. And you know them, Soldier square, our Spanish Memorial, even little—even our dough boy, which has been redone, is still in the middle of a Memorial Highway, which is very prominent, but nobody can stop and look at it and see what it's about. There'll be no education on that, because cars are flying by at 45 miles per hour.

Tim Cody (Fox Valley Veterans Council - President) 26:13

This location will be perfect. It is size, it has capability, it has parking and it has a place for us to build new memorials, because unfortunately, our duty will be called again and again in this world, and we will need spaces for that. So, I really urge you to consider this motion and to vote to change the name to Veteran Memorial Park so that your veterans can be honored. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 26:43

All right, and that's it for members of the public who signed up to speak before the meeting. But is there anyone else who wishes to speak on an item that appears on the agenda, but you didn't have a chance to sign up? All right. All right. Seeing none, we will close public participation.

[Cut]

Mayor Jake Woodford 33:07

All right on to the item from Parks and Recreation Committee. This is item 25-0654, Resolution 4-r-25 rename Appleton Memorial Park to Veterans Memorial Park. We have a motion looking for a second. We have a motion and a second to approve. And did you have a point of order? All right. Alder Fenton, go ahead.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 33:35

Thank you, Your Honor. Just a note on the captioning there, a reminder that when the item came through committee, it was amended to rename it to "Veterans" plural, so the caption doesn't match what was recommended in committee.

Mayor Jake Woodford 33:53

All right, thank you. All right, with that, we'll open the floor for discussion. Alder Smith.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 34:06

Thank you, Your Honor. This had a lively discussion, and I guess I should open by thanking the veterans who just spoke in favor of the renaming and thank you for taking your time and coming in and speaking with us. I'm part of the Parks and Rec committee, and we had a lively discussion last week about this, and every comment I've heard from people on Council has been in favor of meeting the need for a dedicated memorial. And I as well—I want to honor those who have served and those who have fallen for our freedoms. And I just want to start with that.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 34:46

The issue here for me is about a name and a space and the connection of those two things. We all agree about the problem. The current Veterans Park is too small, doesn't have enough parking for events. There's no facilities. That park stands as an example of the problem with naming something but not having a plan in place for creating a memorial space. In fact, when I heard Mr. Voigt speaking, I was thinking to myself, I wish there had been a controversy at that point about the naming of that park, because it wasn't a good choice, and now we have a problem of kind of going back and fixing this problem, which I think we all on Council want to do.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 35:31

My recommendation is that we vote no on the renaming of the Memorial but immediately turn to working on planning and designing an actual memorial space for monuments. Last weekend, I drove across the str—across the state of Wisconsin to Minnesota for the graduation of our son from college and passed through a lot of towns and stopped at memorials. Drove people crazy, but I visited them in Wisconsin Rapids and La Crosse and in Minnesota, and I was struck finally by an informational pamphlet that I saw in Northfield, Minnesota. And it's a it's a pamphlet. It's a beautiful Memorial. It's a smaller town than ours, but it's an impressive place.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 36:23

And there's four—there's three things that I learned from that and that I think could apply to our situation. First, it tells a story of a memorial that is located within another park. I don't think there's any direct connection between the naming of a large, multi-purpose park and a very nice, impressive memorial for our veterans. That was what was talked about in this pamphlet.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 36:49

Second there was a designer and there was an overall plan for the memorial. I'm disturbed at the notion that we will simply repurpose space and set up memorials as we see fit or as they are funded and as opportunities come up. I believe that we should have a memorial that is designed and has an overall set up to it, and that takes a designer, and it takes some time.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 37:15

Now that's the third thing is this memorial—they talk about city council being a part of it. But it didn't take forever. It took two years. So, there's a there's a process of getting a designer, having some work done on imagining this, and then having that memorial set up. And that is the process that I think we need to go through.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 37:36

And from my position on the Parks and Rec committee, I want to leave these parks, our parks, better than they were when I started on the committee, and I believe this is the way to have the best, most honoring memorial

for our veterans. And I'm nervous that what we're going down a path on is another case of naming a place before we have a design and a plan, and I'd like us to go and get a plan.

Aldersperson Martyn Smith (District 4) 38:06

We learned at Parks and Rec committee that the name for Appleton Memorial Park was adopted in 1974. We don't have a record of the deliberations, but they had a list of something like 15 names, more or less. Among them was actually this same name, Veterans Memorial Park. Some statements have been made that make it sound like we're basically going back to the original idea of the—of Memorial Park, but I see some wisdom in whatever happened in the Council and what that Council chose to do. They opted for a more generic name than was on the plate when they showed up. Instead of Veterans Memorial Park, they said Appleton Memorial Park. This was a huge park with multiple uses, and it continues to be just that, and I believe that we should follow their lead, keep it a slightly more generic Appleton Memorial Park that reflects the multi-use capabilities and uses that the park has acquired.

Aldersperson Martyn Smith (District 4) 39:05

And within Appleton Memorial Park there's lots of sub areas. They have nice blue signs pointing to Scheig, the ice rink, and baseball diamonds, what have you, archery. All those are there, and a very nice memorial could be pointed to by the same set of signs that points us to our Appleton Veterans Memorial, and we would spend time to design this. I think that is more reflective of actually, when I read the comments from veterans that came to us through—that had links that came to us through our system. I thought, "What people want is a park. They want a memorial place where there are these monuments, where they're set up nicely, and where events can take place." We can do that, and that's what we should do.

Aldersperson Martyn Smith (District 4) 39:51

I don't think—I think that the name will make us feel like we're done with this project, and that it's it's—we can just kind of move on from here. And I don't believe that's what we should do, and I mean that with all hope that we can do something to honor our veterans as you all are asking for. And even if the vote goes against what I'm asking for, I'm happy that we'll have a space for you one way or another, but this is my view of what would be best for the city in the long run is this path. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 40:23

I'd like to note for the record that there is a veterans memorial area within Memorial Park. It's located near the Scheig Center. Significant investments have been made to the veterans memorial over the years, including a monument that was created through donations. It was designed and built by veterans, and is already located in the park. So I'd just like to note that for the record, because it may not have been clear from Alder Smith comments that such an area already exists within Memorial Park. We'll continue discussion with Alder Croatt.

Aldersperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 40:55

Thank you, Mayor. Wanted to—first of all, I agree with a lot of what Alder Smith said. I was at the committee meeting, and I just wanted to expand on my earlier comment about a possible refer back, because I personally felt that the committee didn't have enough information to make a vote and send a recommendation to Council, but they did. There was a lot of unanswered questions. There was—the only thing in the packet was a one-page document with the resolution. There was no memo from staff. Good questions were answered—or asked at the meeting, and some answers were given, but I felt like there needed to be a much deeper discussion and get some additional questions answered, and that didn't happen.

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 41:39

So, we have it here tonight, which great we can have committee level discussion at council about this. My issue with it is, is a process issue. You know, we got we got some information following the committee meeting from the director via email. We got information delivered tonight minutes before the council meeting, a packet that's multi paged that was not the same that was included with the park and rec committee packet. One thing that I heard at the committee-level discussion was that it was—the way I saw it was there was two options. We can rename it and figured some things out later, or we can figure some things out now and rename it at the appropriate time which I think somewhat aligns with what Alder Smith was suggesting.

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 42:30

So that's—I struggle with a no vote on this. I definitely see the value in doing something I don't need—I don't feel the need to rush into it. Let's do it the right way and take that approach. Thanks.

Mayor Jake Woodford 42:44

Alder Hartzheim.

Alderman Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 42:48

Thank you, Chair. My thanks as well to the veterans who have come here tonight and also to all veterans who haven't come and who are all in our hearts. I see this resolution as—it has value, but I see it as a easy value. And by that, I mean this would be, as Alder Smith said, an easy way for us to say, yes, we support this, and this is how we're going to do it. We're going to take a name on it. But my fear is that that becomes more lip service. It's sort of the same thing that Alder Smith said. I still see value in it, but again, I fear that that's more lip service than true planning and true feeling of support for the veterans in this city.

Alderman Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 43:39

The packet that was provided to us by Alder Van Zeeland, which I assume she will speak on as well, noted that there is some cost involved. And of course, while that is minimal and that is less of an importance than honoring our veterans, there is still some something to discuss there. So, I'd be interested in how that potentially would be paid. And then there's also some mention of donor assistance, fundraising efforts, et cetera, and that was not brought up during committee discussion either. So, I'm interested in where that comes from, and what other things might be discussed behind that.

Alderman Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 44:22

And I'm glad that you pointed out that there is already a very vibrant veterans memorial at the Scheig gardens at Appleton Memorial Park. I'm curious whether we could do something similar to what Alder Smith mentioned, which is kind of combine many and make that a larger area. And I guess the way that it's set up may or may not be conducive to that. So, I feel as though there's lots of other discussion to be had, and just saying yes to this resolution puts a put some lip service on it, but I am in the same boat as Alder Smith in wanting more when it comes to that. And honestly, bottom line for me is that everyone in this city—well, many in this city—call it Memorial Park anyway, and I fear that we put veterans in front of Memorial Park and it will still be just Memorial Park. So again, that doesn't feel to me genuine in us really trying to honor the veterans' service in our city. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 45:32

Alder Schultz.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 45:35

Thank you, Mayor. I too am a veteran. I served in Desert Storm, and I'm also a life member of Post 2778, Commander sitting there. I would hate to vote no on this, and I hope we don't get to that point. And I'll just—I guess I'll first say that I'm in support of the resolution title and renaming the park and fixing a problem. But what we're doing here is trying to fix a number of problems. And the first—if it was just to fix the one, and I think Jack has been here telling me that are telling us that this problem has existed for decades and it hasn't been fixed. And if that were the sole purpose of this to get rid of the veterans park that doesn't serve veterans and create a veterans park that does, that's why I signed on to this. Where it gets a little sticky for me as we're trying to solve a couple other problems.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 46:29

One of the other problems is we have a couple memorials that are—we've been looking at for a decade now. Park and Rec director Gazza and I and others have recognized that some of the memorials in the city needed help, and after establishing that line item in 2015 with kudos to the city and staff and this body for approving funding, we fully restored both the dough boy and the Civil War Memorial downtown. Those were not cheap affairs. If I remember right, the Civil War Memorial was over \$80,000 in the end, and that was just for restoration. So, we're thinking about creating a new space and creating new monuments. There's a significant cost to doing something right.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 47:15

And as I look at the body of the resolves in this resolution that I signed on to, it feels a little piecemeal to me, because we've as a body, we voted to hold the restoration of the Spanish American War Memorial until we fixed or addressed or figured out what to do with Soldier square, and that still sits in a position where we voted to hold it, so this body would have to take to take action to free that up and move it to this new space, if that's what we decided to do, and I'm not necessarily opposed to that, but that's the problem. The problem is, I've been fighting, and other constituents, including better groups, have been fighting for years to restore—to fix a problem in our the heart of our downtown, which was supposed to be and once was, a revered space for veterans. And this feels a little bit like we can create a new spot. We can call it the Veterans Memorial Park, and now there's really no need or desire or will be any impetus to sort of fix that other problem that we've never been able to fix. We restored one, but we've never able to fix it. And opportunities in the last decade have come and gone. They're not there, and I don't think there's a solution to the current makeup of that space. I don't, I don't see a fix, but there are other opportunities to maybe address, or think about or consider that we could do something that's closer to the heart of downtown with at least that one monument or that one memorial that we were talking about restoring.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 48:47

So that's a little bit why I'm hesitant in supporting the entirety of the resolution. It feels like it's a fix to some problems, but as my colleagues have stated, it doesn't feel like we're taking our time to truly create that space. And you are correct, we spent a lot of money restoring the river war memorial and accepting this new one that was placed in the heart of that that space. But if the intent here is to create a space where we can bring in new monuments to essentially recognize everything after World War Two, which we don't really have in this city, we need—it feels like, as Alder Smith said, we need a sort of a plan what that would look like, and how would we do it in a way that really makes sense.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 49:33

If you visit the veterans memorial spaces that we talked about—the Isle of Valor, the High Grounds, or High View, I forget exactly what it's called—those spaces took a lot of time planning and energy to put together

before they were named, before the broke—ground was broke on those spaces. They knew what they were doing. They had a concise plan. And they are phenomenal if you visit them.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 49:54

By naming the space and moving a couple memorials into that place which already has a kind of a quasi-memorial spot set up—as a veteran if I walked in that space and saw a couple things that were pulled from other parts of the city and this other thing that's there, I would not—I would not feel like the city did the best that it could do. I feel like it would—it's trying, and we are trying to solve it, and we're trying to do this thing which I commend, but I don't feel like it's the best that we can do, and I would love for us to do better than that, but it doesn't come cheap. It's not just replacing some signage and renaming a park space.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 50:31

So that's where I sit. I'm in favor of fixing the veterans park, which we have right now, and whether that's this renaming of the entire Memorial Park, whether it's carving out a chunk and designate it as a new veterans park, or whether it's just a delineation and some significant signage and a sort of a site plan to do something more grandiose than what we're talking about. I'm struggling on a number of levels, as you can as you can imagine. So, let's keep having the conversation. But I hope, I hope some in some way we can, we can dive a little bit deeper into this and come up with a better plan than what we have on the paper.

Mayor Jake Woodford 51:11

Alder Fenton.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 51:15

Thank you, Your Honor. When I read the agenda for the Parks and Recreation meeting when I was doing my homework, I had questions about this resolution, and I wrote them in my newsletter. The question was: Is this resolution in response to a citizen request? What happens to the current Veterans Park on South Memorial Drive? What would be the cost of changing the name on all signage, city documents, etc.? What existing memorials would be located to the park? And as my colleagues have mentioned, during the Parks and Recreation Committee meeting last week, which I attended, there was a very robust discussion, and I got answers to a number of my questions during that meeting. Director Gazza helpfully provided some more information that I wasn't able to find, like how did Memorial Park become Memorial Park in the first place? And at the end of that meeting, I was comfortable with the answers to those questions with—and along with the information that Director Gazza provided, that some of my colleagues, the sponsors of the resolution, provided, and I think I'm in favor of going forward with this.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 52:33

So, we've all noted the veterans space that was created in the current Appleton Memorial Park and the memorial that was paid for with donated funds. There's a reason that that wasn't put in the existing Veterans Park. There just wasn't room for it. So, by providing the space the name, I think it will encourage people to say, you know, not, I'm going to—I'm going to try to fund a memorial too. And as Alder Schultz talked, we don't have memorials past World War Two, and there were, you know, many of our fellow citizens died in those conflicts as well, and they're not recognized in memorials. But having a place, a dedicated park, a space for that, should encourage donations.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 53:28

I want to remind us all that when the city dedicated the land and the name for Lundgaard Park, that was almost completely funded with private donations because there was a space. There was a reason for folks to make

those donations. And it is baseball season; at the at the risk of quoting "Field of Dreams", if we name the park, we have the space, I think that the memorials and the observances will come. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 54:05

Alder Van Zeeland,

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 54:08

Thank you, Chair. I've been feverishly taking notes while my fellow alders were speaking to answer their questions, but before I get started, I do want to apologize to Alder Croatt. Memorial Park lies along a few aldersperson boundaries, and I mistakenly thought that it actually resided in Alder Hayden's district. I should have double checked that, and I didn't do that, and that didn't allow me the opportunity to offer him a co-sponsorship or to at least make him aware of this ahead of time, so I just want to make that apology publicly.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 54:45

There were two questions that I was responsible for leaving the committee meeting. One was the veteran's apostrophe versus veterans without an apostrophe. I am pleased to note that the veteran's with an apostrophe was actually a misunderstanding. So the amendment as we amended is how the veterans who made this request would prefer to see it.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 55:10

The other was involving the cost, getting the detailed costs, which you saw, is estimated \$750 to \$1,600 including changing the sign at the other Veterans Park. Also, Alder Hartzheim had asked about more information about possible donors, and I just want to remind everyone that when we had the veterans speak ahead of our our discussion of this item at the Parks and Rec committee, that a couple of those folks said that they would be willing to even help raise donations. So outside of the possible donor that we discussed, others did make that make that offer.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 55:55

Finally, there have been two sorts of themes that have come about as I've discussed this item. The first one is two questions over and over: isn't there already a Veterans Park? And why not dedicate a specific area instead of renaming the entire park? Yes, we have a Veterans Park, and most people don't realize it, which is why our veterans are here. Everyone knows Memorial Park though; it's Appleton's largest and most used park, and even alderspersons in this room didn't know that we have a veterans memorial. So, changing the name of the park ensures that that rec—that lack of recognition doesn't continue, and I think that's really important.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 56:43

The other theme is people asking if this is really meaningful for veterans. And I'm not a veteran, but I see no reason to believe that the veterans behind this request, or the representatives from the Veterans Council, whose organization is a consortium of veteran service organizations—I don't know why they would be telling us it is for any other reason but that it is meaningful to them. Why aren't we taking them at their word? And why are alderspersons choosing to override their input with their own? So, I'll leave you with that. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 57:21

It looks like Director Gazza has some information to share. Which microphone, please? Okay, go ahead, Director Gazza.

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 57:28

Thank you, Chair. A couple things I wanted to just note just what I was hearing. There was a conversation about a dedicated name Veterans Park versus non-dedicated. And you see what happened in a memorial in Pierce Park, nobody knows that there's even any veterans memorials or recognition to veterans in Pierce Park because the park name doesn't even recognize the park of having anything within it. So, I do think having it Veterans Memorial Park really distinguishes and tells the real purpose and what the park is trying to do.

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 57:59

The other piece was with the planning. It sounded—you know, sorry if I took a little offense to almost like haphazard planning. There was significant planning that went into the park. The park itself has a park master plan, updated park master plan. It has a comprehensive outdoor recreation plan. There's a trail master plan. And when the Scheig Center was remodeled, that included a plan, and that plan specifically engaged an architect to create a veterans memorial, a veterans memorial that would not only house current memorials but future memorials.

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 58:36

It's a little bit hard to plan for a future memorial without knowing what the memorial is. Is it a statue? Is it a plaque? Is it going to be a wall? What is it going to be? So that's why all the green space exists. That's why there's a circular walkway to add smaller memorials, and there's green spaces off the left and to the right of the path if there's smaller memorials to be added. The planning is done, and so what I guess I'm trying to say is we're talking about let's plan for a veterans memorial because it doesn't exist today. It exists. It's done. This Council's invested in it. You already made the decision to put it there. The veterans came to us to ask us to change the name of the park.

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 59:22

If people would be uncomfortable with some of the other memorials, I would say the resolution says nothing about relocating memorials. It says a "plan to relocate select existing memorials will be developed by staff in consultation with community organize—organizations and leaders and reviewed by appropriate commissions and committees of jurisdiction." That means it has to go through a lot of processes to determine if it is appropriate for each memorial to go there. It may be determined that the memorials at Pierce Park aren't appropriate for that park. Maybe it's better to go downtown. So, it would go through a process. So, approving this tonight does not relocate any memorials, and it doesn't buy any new memorials. It renames the park. That's the only thing that takes action tonight.

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 1:00:14

I called TLC, the person that created the sign right at the entry of Ballard, told them the cause. They told me the updated costs would be \$1,550. I said, "Would you be willing—do you have an interest in veterans?" They said, "Absolutely. What can we do?" I said, "You tell me what you can do." She goes, "I'll take \$600 off the price right now if you want. I would love to participate in making this Veterans Memorial Park, and as a sign company." As it was, noted the interest of having this happen by our community.

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 1:00:49

And then again, I would say to Alderperson Van Zeeland, the veterans are the ones—they're the ones that have the feeling. They're the ones that live with this. I can't speak for you guys. You guys—I listen to you guys, and if you guys think this is the right thing to do, on behalf of the veterans I respect that. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:01:14

Alder Firkus.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 1:01:17

Thank you, Mayor. I think this discussion about whether or not we should rename the park versus name a section of park, I'd probably be a little more warm to it if it wasn't for the fact that we have Veterans Park and we have to do something with that as far as a naming rights go. As I said at committee level, that park—it's not—there's just no way to make that into a workable space for what we really want out of a space that honors veterans.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 1:01:45

Just think of somebody who's new to Appleton. Just move here or visiting, and they see that we have a veterans park, and they go there and they see what they see. They're probably going to be underwhelmed at best. Because we have Veterans Park and Memorial Park, I am more in favor of the renaming route.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 1:02:08

As far as planning, I think we have a vision, and I'm perfectly comfortable with having a vision and implementing that incrementally if that's the way we want to go. As I said at the committee meeting, I don't think we have to have every nut and bolt planned out right at this moment. I think it is perfectly fine to take this piece by piece, because what—as Mr. Voigt has said, this is never going to be done. There are wars that we do—don't have memorials for, and there may be reasons to create more morals in the future that we can't prepare for no matter how well we try and plan. So, I hope we will approve this, and I hope this is the beginning and not just the whole thing. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:02:52

Alder Croatt.

Aldersperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 1:02:55

Thank you, Mayor. Just a couple things. I want to thank Alder Van Zeeland for her comments and our phone conversation about this, call it oversight, on where the park—which district the park is in. Clearly the entire thing is in district 14. So, thank you for that.

Aldersperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 1:03:13

I personally feel a dedicated space within Appleton Memorial Park would give this a greater focus and be more impactful, especially if the signage and promotion of that space was substantial. I—like Alder Hartzheim, I think everyone's going to continue to refer to it as Memorial Park. If there was a dedicated and expanded space (because I realize it's already there)—expanded space would be more impactful in my opinion.

Aldersperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 1:03:46

I was one that asked about the cost at the committee level, and I did that because I'm not overly concerned about the costs, but when we sit in these chairs, everything we do is somehow tied to money and budget, and we should be asking those questions about what is this going to cost. None of that was presented prior to the committee meeting, so that question was asked, and these figures are higher than what was stated. And I'm very happy to hear that a vendor is going to want to participate in cost savings. That's excellent. That's awesome. And I'm and I'm fine with the cost, so that's not a factor. It just—I want everyone to know that when we sit in these chairs, we—and we look at the budget—we have to understand where the money's coming from. And I don't think the question was answered that Alder Hartzheim posed earlier about where is the where is the money coming from? I don't want to get too hung up on that, because this this is a bigger, more important project than 300—200—2—or \$300 or \$2,000 or even \$5,000, but that's the reason why the questions were asked about the cost. And it's very clear that Director Gazza is very passionate about this project, by the way.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:05:02

Alder Van Zeeland.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 1:05:04

I'm gonna yield actually, I would—or actually, if I could just ask Director Gazza to answer the question that Alder Croatt just had. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:05:14

Director Gazza.

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 1:05:16

So, each year in our grounds budget, we put money aside to update signs throughout. The wooden signs need maintenance. So, I would ask that sign to be prioritized for an update this year. In fact, when I looked at the sign, it actually needs some updating regardless of the fact, if the name changes or not. It's starting to get a little bit weathered, and the lettering could be painted. So, the money would just come from our general update and maintenance fund. Well, we do signage every year throughout the 30 parks, which we haven't started yet this year. So, we would select that as one of the many signs that will get a little TLC this year.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:05:57

Alder Smith.

Aldersperson Martyn Smith (District 4) 1:05:58

Just a couple notes that, you know, the renaming of the current Veterans Memorial is, of course, that doesn't seem like it fits its use, and the name doesn't go with that park. So that is something that I think is easy enough to take care of. And then just a note on the timing about the current veterans memorial in Memorial Park. In 2023 I believe it was, the river veterans memorial was built, and the sign there says, "Let this living memorial, composed simply of stone, trees, and light, serve as a space of quiet reflection and gratitude for future generations to honor the contribution of America's veterans." That was a designed space and was designed to be a kind of quiet corner. It was designed to allow people solitude. And it's a successful space in that, and there's no note on this sign or elsewhere of the coming influx of many more memorials.

Aldersperson Martyn Smith (District 4) 1:06:59

And so, what we're, what—I think, in 2025, two years after this, my understanding is there was a meeting with the veterans groups, the mayor, Director Gazza, and at that point, there were options for a kind of broad veterans memorial that would be developed. And from the information that that Director Gazza gave me, there were—Memorial Park, was there, a little bit of changes to Veterans Park, or maybe we move it to a future park. So, the idea is this, this isn't a like—the river veterans memorial isn't simply naturally growing out—the current idea for memorial isn't growing naturally out of the river veterans memorial, but it's something that is being added, and I believe it takes another step of planning to make that work. And so, I appreciate the river veterans memorial. I think it could be better signed, but we're talking about something an order of magnitude larger, more ambitious for the city, and we should think about how that will look, and we should probably get a designer for it. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:08:12

Alder Hartzheim.

Alderson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 1:08:14

Thank you, Chair. At the risk of doing committee work at Council, I would like to propose an amendment—it's the balloon float. In the "Now therefore be it resolved" portion of the existing resolution, section one, to read, please, "a portion of Appleton Memorial Park identified in the Memorial Park/Scheig Master Plan as event space expansion shall henceforth be named and dedicated as Veterans Acres at Memorial—Appleton Memorial Park effective insert date". And if I may, I'm trying to do all the things that we've talked about here today and make it clear that we have a—that we will have a very important portion of what we all refer to as Memorial Park for the veterans in this city. Again, it's a balloon float. If y'all don't think it should float, shoot it down. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:09:36

Motion has been seconded by Alder Croatt. We'll begin discussion on the proposed amendment. Please clear the queue. Alder van Zeeland.

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 1:09:51

Thank you, Chair. I just want to lay out what's happening here. So, the veterans asked us to rename the park Veterans Memorial Park instead of just Appleton Memorial Park. What we're offering in this amendment is to rename the place next to the current veterans memorial something else instead, and I just find that incredibly condescending. I think if you saw the reactions of the folks in the room when you stated that, I don't know how anyone could support that.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:10:24

Please direct your comments to the chair.

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 1:10:26

And I would ask—I wasn't—that wasn't directed at any alder. It was just a "you" in general.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:10:31

Okay.

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 1:10:32

I don't know how you could vote for this after seeing that. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:10:40

Any further discussion on the proposed amendment made and seconded by Alders Hartzheim and Croatt? Alder Smith.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 1:10:49

I could support the amendment from Alder Hartzheim. I wish that the—I wish there was a way not to lock the name down in stone so to speak, so that there could be discussion of what that is. Maybe that could be, you know, to be determined. But I do like the idea. And I just want to also return to the to the fact that our goal, our duty here is to lead, and there—we need to make a decision with our knowledge of the city and what has worked in the past, not just to rubber stamp a request, but to learn from the past error in naming a park and that that was something that shouldn't have happened and we have to recover from and we should—you know, I think we can feel free to make what is to us the best decision in honoring the veterans. And I took that what Alder Hartzheim said as very much in that spirit of trying to do best for the veterans, and I support that amendment, again, with the exception of if we could get that name out of there.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:12:00

Any further discussion on the amendment? Hearing none, we have a motion and a second to amend. Please cast your votes. Do—Alder Hayden, how do you vote? Uh oh. I don't feel comfortable—we can't chat this one. So, if Alder Hayden is not—if he has no audio. Okay.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 1:12:48

—get a message from Alder Hayden that he's listening to the Granicus. So, there's a little bit of a lag. He can't hear through zoom.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:12:55

There he is. Okay, okay. Thank you. Just so long as he is hearing the deliberations. Okay, that—okay, thank you. All right. Motion fails, nine to five with Alder Heffernan abstaining.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:13:22

All right, we're back to the item. Alder Schultz.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 1:13:35

Thank you, Chair. Could I direct a question to Director Gazza?

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:13:38

Ask your question.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 1:13:40

At committee, there was discussion about funding, potential funding, privately, for a new pavilion that might replace something that currently is there that needs to be addressed. Can you give us some sense of where that—how close in proximity to the to the river do you anticipate that could be, and would that be part of this redefined—

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:14:01

I'm going to say here that we're getting a little outside of the scope of the discussion. It's a good question and one that that should be addressed. It's just right now in this discussion, I think it's going to pull us a little bit away from what we need to what we need to handle here. But not to say it's not an important question, and something that certainly, even the next Parks and Rec committee you could bring back, if the chair agrees, for further discussion at committee. Would that be all right? Okay.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 1:14:29

If you allow, can I continue?

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:14:30

Please continue.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 1:14:31

I'm trying to get a sense of the sort of space that we're considering, and there's a box—sort of very generalized box around the veterans memorial just to designate where that is. And I appreciate Alderman Smith's history of the river. That too, the existing memorial there now is also a problem that we fixed. The previous river memorial that was funded by the Ogilvy family, and again, a significant amount of money went to that one, had a lot of issues that made it almost impossible for anybody to navigate. And I—I'll get to my point.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:14:54

Yeah.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 1:14:54

Thank you, but we had to fix it, and so what we took out was an arresting memorial, because in order to get from the parking into the Scheig Center, you had to cross small bridges, and on the other side was this plaque that was just red. And so, you almost were confronted with what this was. And to your point, it was meant as a very quiet, reverent space. There was no iconography, no flags, no military vehicles, anything like that. It was meant to be a severely—a serene, contemplative space. And in the redesign process, which I took part of, we attempted to recreate that, and I think we did an okay job. It does—it's not quite what I had hoped for, because it's a little flat so, but we did our best to fix this problem, and it's still that quiet space.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 1:15:49

We did land a new memorial in the heart of it, and some—I heard a comment earlier about what we would just maybe add somewhere else around that memorial, and I'm hoping that the space itself is much—there's some consideration for much wider area that would be considered this new memorial space in Memorial Park, and that it's not simply around this space. So, I guess I'm just providing a little bit of context to follow up to what you were saying about the history. And here's this history again where we—these things that we create are fixes, but sometimes they don't quite get there—right? We did our best. We had funding. We created this space, but it's not quite there. And so, if we pass this, I think we can get there, but I would hope that we give some due consideration to thinking about the space that is required for a monument. Imagine putting the Civil War mon—

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:16:41

And Alder Schultz, I'll just point out again that, per the current language of the resolution, a plan would be developed, and that development would happen in consultation with the committees of jurisdiction.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 1:16:57

I'm responding to a comment by Director Gazza saying they would go around this space from even—

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:16:59

Understand, subject to a future planning process.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 1:17:01

I appreciate the time.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:17:02

All right. Alder van Zeeland.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 1:17:06

Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to point Aldersperson Schultz to the last page that shows the Memorial Park Scheig Master Plan in the packet of information. If you look, that's actually the zoomed in area where it says "event space expansion" near the Scheig. So obviously I can't speak, and I won't speak to any more design questions. I don't have the answers for that, but this is what is in the approved master plan that I have provided the alderspersons.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:17:38

Alder Heffernan.

Aldersperson Patti Heffernan (District 8) 1:17:39

Thank you, Chair. Obviously, this is something that we all care about a lot, and I want to say thank you for your service. Thank you for being here. Thank you for speaking.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:17:53

Alder Heffernan, just before you go on with your comments, I noted that you abstained from the vote on the amendment.

Aldersperson Patti Heffernan (District 8) 1:18:02

The amendment, yes.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:18:03

So, so is it your intention to vote on the item unamended? I just want to be clear, for purposes of discussion.

Aldersperson Patti Heffernan (District 8) 1:18:12

Unamended, yes.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:18:13

Okay, great. Please proceed.

Aldersperson Patti Heffernan (District 8) 1:18:15

Yes, absolutely. I too, had a lot of questions about this, and absolutely, just a name change is something—I mean, I always assumed that Memorial Park was for the veterans to begin with. So, if we needed to be more specific, I didn't really necessarily see an issue with that. But I did have a lot of questions, and I wanted to also thank Alder van Zeeland for laying a lot of this out.

Aldersperson Patti Heffernan (District 8) 1:18:48

My concern is that if this doesn't pass, that it will be taken as a as a "no", and I—and what I'm not hearing from anyone here tonight is that it's not a no, it's not like this, or that there's more work that needs to be done. I did abstain on the amendment. I didn't feel like I had enough information or enough understanding to really vote on that either way. Yeah, my fear is that this won't pass, and it might end up being tossed to the side like some of the other projects that we've had, not as not—I shouldn't say that, not tossed to the side. I don't think that anybody is just haphazardly and uncaringly ignoring these things, but we do have quite a bit—we we've got some work to do. I and having—and thank you, Director Gazza, for clarifying that you know under the under number three on here that this is the a plan that is to be developed, that we don't have it here today, but there is a pathway, and there's planning, and you're clearly very passionate about this, and you're very patient, I thought, in your responses to the questions, and I really, really appreciate that. I would support this resolution. I was not sure where I stood on this, but I would support this resolution. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:20:26

All right, just as com—as the discussion continues, just want to note, now we have speakers in the queue who've contributed a couple of times in the in the discussion so far. We'll continue with that. I want to, want to get to folks we haven't heard from, but then also, just note, feels like we're getting to a place now where, where we're hearing similar themes in many of the comments. So, I would just suggest, if you have new things or additional questions, points you'd like to make, please stay in the queue or get in if you aren't, but I'd like to keep us moving toward a vote. Next is going to be Alder Lambrecht.

Aldersperson Josh Lambrecht (District 1) 1:21:06

Thank you, Mayor. Thank you, veterans, for sharing your perspective and bringing this issue forward to the to the council, and thank you Director Gazza for sharing more information regarding this. I think what I'd like to say is that language matters. Language evolves with times and being able to name this space in a way that reflects the requests of the community that it impacts most—it impacts all of us, but for the veterans to be coming forth and sharing this, I think that matters, and we should listen to what that is that they're saying. It feels to me that the resolution as outlined provides both the pathway to the solution regarding the Veterans Memorial Park but also includes opportunities for future planning. I'd also say that it is this Council that can move items forward and can be able to enhance and continue to make future investments in that space, and so it's really on us to continue this work forward in ensuring that it doesn't get, you know, down the line 10 years further from any potential improvements and things of that nature. So, I'm leaning towards supporting this resolution in renaming the park.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:22:31

Alder Schultz.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 1:22:34

I didn't have any except to say that I made a comment about a piecemeal approach to pulling sculptures memorials into the park. I didn't have anything negative to say about the planning of that space, just so I made that clear.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:22:51

Alder Wolff.

Aldersperson Nate Wolff (District 12) 1:22:51

Thank you, Chair. As I sat here and listened to everyone's comments, I've really appreciated the dialogue from everyone. It's an interesting topic, for sure. In my tenure here, I have watched people in this room, no one in particular, but say that they're going to do something further once a resolution has come and gone and don't come up with anything after the fact. I am concerned that we're going to rename this park, maybe build a statue, and that's all we're going to do, and then pat ourselves on the back. I will support this, but I do expect pressure from the same people in the room who came here today to do more past that. I expect it. This is not enough. There are still people starving on our streets who served this nation. This is not enough. I expect more. I will vote for it. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:24:06

Alder Van Zeeland.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 1:24:09

Thank you, Chair. I've heard a few colleagues mention that, you know, they don't want to follow through with this, but they don't want there to be hard feelings about it, and I've been around long enough on this Council to know that we've had communities ask us for things, we've told—some people have told them, you know what? We want to debate it more. We want more. And it hurt people, and it filled this room full of people, and you can't undo that. And I just want everyone to consider that, you know, in a perfect world, nobody's feelings are hurt by a yes or no vote, but that's not the world we operate in. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 1:24:50

With no further speakers in the queue, I'll check one more time. Is there any further discussion? All right, hearing none, we have a motion and a second to approve. Please cast your votes. Motion passes 13 to one with Alder Smith voting against. All right, that item has been approved.