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\$35K state grant for Granby veterans memorial restored

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GRANBY — A \$35,000 grant to help fund construction of a veterans memorial has been approved after it was suspended in October (<http://www.gazettenet.com/State-grant-for-Granby-Veterans-Memorial-on-hold-6595528>) as part of a state spending freeze.

As a result, the nonprofit Friends of Granby Veterans Inc. is moving ahead with purchases for the project.

"I didn't exactly jump up and down but pretty close," Mike Pandora, president of the nonprofit, said of his reaction when he heard the news earlier this month.

Pandora said he received a phone call from state Rep. John W. Scibak, D-South Hadley, saying it looked like the funds would be released.

A follow-up email to the state Department of Veterans' Affairs, which earlier froze the money, confirmed the good news.

"I think it's great news," Scibak said.

Scibak explained that a number of earmarks were put on hold while the governor as well as the Legislature worked to clarify revenues.

Following a few phone calls, Scibak said, he discovered the earmarks, including the one for the veterans memorial, were no longer frozen.

Given the effort the group has put into the memorial, Scibak said he thought it was appropriate for them to receive the money not only for the cause but also because of the state's obligation to provide the grant.

On Dec. 8, Pandora said he received an email with a contract for



the \$35,000. Five days later, he sent the completed documents back to the state.

“Now we are getting ready to make some initial purchases of lettering,” Pandora said.

On the list for purchase are plaques bearing the names of Granby men and woman who served in the military as well as the medallions representing the different military branches.

The nonprofit has until the end of the fiscal year, or June 30, 2017, to spend the funds, according to Pandora, so the plan is to get as much done before that time.

In September, state Sen. Eric Lesser, D-Longmeadow, announced the \$35,000 state grant along with Scibak.

Reached Tuesday, Lesser said he was very excited about the news and looking forward to the project breaking ground.

“This was much quicker than it could have been,” Lesser said of the state’s release of the grant.

Lesser said although it may be a modest amount of money in the overall scheme of the state budget, it will go a very long way to help build the memorial near of the corner of State and North streets near the center of town.

“As a son of a veteran myself and as someone who cares deeply, it’s a very happy day,” Lesser said.

Moving forward, the group has a roast beef dinner fundraiser planned for Feb. 4. Tickets for the event are on sale.

More information about the event and the memorial can be found at www.granbyveteransmemorial.org.

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