

Park rises to honor Granby's veterans: After a dozen years of planning, town to unveil its memorial park this Saturday

By EMILEE KLEIN

GRANBY — Town veterans have a permanent home, at long last.

After a dozen years of planning and fundraising, Granby Memorial Park is set for an official soft launch on Veterans Day this Saturday.

“They’ve never really truly had an actual Veterans Memorial. There were plaques across the street in the Old Town Hall, but they were mismatched and one was marble, others were brass or bronze,” said Michael Pandora, president of the Friends of Granby Veterans. “So now this is actually going to be a Veterans Memorial Park.

“So it’s going to be not just this wall, but it’s going to go all the way to the street.”

The showcase of the park — built on an elevated site at the corner of State and North streets with materials and labor donated by community members — is a stone wall monument decorated with plaques engraved with hundreds of names of Granby veterans, from the Revolutionary War to the war in Afghanistan.

Other features in the park include a tank donated from Fort Devens and a flower garden.

The American Legion will present the park to the community at an 11 a.m. ceremony on Saturday. An official launch will take place on Memorial Day next May with additional plaques added to monument walls at that time.



Granby Veterans Memorial Committee Chair Jason Richard said most of the materials and labor were either donated or offered as a discount, allowing the whole project to be covered by \$175,000. Without the help of community members, Richards estimates the tab for the memorial would have soared to over half a million dollars. Most of the donated or discounted materials were given by local businesses and professionals.

“For instance, everything you’re standing on: All the flatware concrete is done by Pioneer Valley Concrete,” Richard said, opting to wait to list all the other companies until the day of the unveiling. “On Veterans Day, I’m literally going to go through every single one to make sure I don’t miss anybody.”

The Granby Veterans Memorial project began in 2011 when citizens wanted to create a place to honor the town’s veterans. Originally, four bronze plaques and two marble plaques with the names of town veterans from the Civil War to the Vietnam War hung in Kellogg Hall. However, the plaques were removed when town government offices moved to West State Street. The marble plaques now reside at the Granby Public Library.

The Granby Veterans Memorial Committee met in September 2012 to start the project. Two years later, the committee realized it could sidestep bureaucratic hurdles if a nonprofit handled the money for the project rather than town government.

Since then, the Granby Veterans Memorial Committee and Friends of Granby Veterans have worked together to build the

memorial. Friends of Granby Veterans hosted fundraisers, from veterans dinners and barbeque to road races and golf tournaments, while the memorial committee worked on construction logistics. Pandora said that many of the members of the two groups overlap.

“We expect now that we’ve got the initial project in place, that we’ll probably have donations coming in and so forth because for over 10 years, they didn’t see any progress,” Pandora said. “But now they are and they’re seeing major progress this year.”

According to the Granby Veterans Memorial website, veterans can be added to the memorial if they served in active duty at least one day, received an honorable discharge and lived in Granby for 10 years. Veterans killed in action will be identified with an asterick.

Any Granby citizen who wishes to add a name to the memorial can apply on the Granby Veterans Memorial website. Richards said that committee will choose a cut-off date for honor roll applications, likely for January, to ensure the plaques will be ready in time for Memorial Day. However, names will continue to be added in chunks for years to come.

“And as we get enough (names) for a plaque, another plaque will go right below where the other ones,” Pandora said.

Pandora notes that the park is still in development. Friends of Granby Veterans is currently fundraising for a gazebo to add to the park in spring, along with benches, gravel pathways and decorative flowers. Flags of each military division will fly at the entrance of the park. Even after the official opening in May, the committee and nonprofit will continue to beautify the park.

“We do want people here to realize and understand that this park is for them,” Pandora said.

“Yes, the backdrop is the veterans, but the park is for the community. We will just keep fundraising and keep extending it until we get to the road.”

Emilee Klein can be reached at eklein@gazettenet.com.