

\$250K loan means veterans park could be finished early

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middletown

Middletown Veterans Memorial Park will include a wall with the names of veterans and other information, a gazebo and flags of the various branches of the U.S. military.

Vietnam veteran James Remer has been dreaming about a Veterans Memorial Park in Middletown for many years. It's become a prime passion and one of the driving forces in his life.

Remer, a member of a veterans committee that is planning the park, should see that dream come to fruition much sooner after the township supervisors recently approved a \$250,000 loan to the committee.

Supervisors George Leonhauser, Chuck Thompson, Jasper Caro, Robert McMonagle and Kathy Heuer voted to approve the loan at their July 28 meeting. To be paid back by the committee over the next five years, the loan probably will allow the veterans memorial park, already well under way, to be completed by the end of the year, said Remer.

"It's fantastic," he said. "This money, along with the support of all the unions and community members we've already gotten, will allow us to go full steam ahead until this is done. There should be people working up there just about every day."

Middletown Veterans Memorial Park, located next to the township public works complex on Veterans Highway (Route 413), will include a wall with the names of veterans and other information, a gazebo, flags of the various branches of the U.S. military and other features. An old World War II Sherman tank, donated to Middletown by the Penn del American Legion Post, already has been set down on a concrete slab inside the park, where it will remain a permanent fixture.

Members of local carpenters, masons, operating engineers, electricians and other unions have donated more than 1,000 hours of labor to the park, and other volunteers have donated 1,000 more, said Remer. The veterans committee also has gotten help from many other sources, including discounts on materials from Lowe's and other area businesses, said Remer.

"Giles and Ransome has let us use a piece of (grading) equipment for more than a month now," he said. "The normal cost to rent that would have been astronomical."

The loan from the supervisors will be used for concrete, stone, lumber, landscaping and other materials needed to finish the park, said Remer. Finishing the park a year or more ahead of schedule will allow many of the remaining World War II veterans and their spouses to see the completed park before they die, he added.

"Another reason we went for this loan now is that, with the economy the way it is, a lot of union members are out of work and available to work on this now," Remer said.

"The money will let everyone keep working," added supervisors Chairman Chuck Thompson. "If everything had come to a halt because money dried up, it would have set them way back. Also, fund raising might be more effective once the park is in place and everyone can see what it is."

The loan came from money available in the parks and recreation capital fund and will not require a tax increase for residents, Thompson said.

An event to raise money to help pay back the loan will be held Oct. 3 at the township-owned Middletown Country Club, said Remer. For information on that or other ways to donate or help with the memorial, call 215-750-3825.

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