

# Board embraces memorial proposal

- San Dieguito trustees president: 'It is our honor to memorialize them'

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ENCINITAS — San Dieguito Union High School District trustees on Thursday embraced a veterans group's proposal to construct a war memorial on the San Dieguito Academy campus.

"It's absolutely critical that we as a society honor our fallen servicemen," Trustee Dee Rich said.

"There is no greater sacrifice that a person can make for his country," board President Bill Flores said. "It is our honor to memorialize them."

Members of the San Dieguito Vietnam Memorial Project have asked to install a memorial on the San Dieguito Academy campus to recognize San Dieguito High School alumni who were killed while fighting wars.

During their high school days, the school on Santa Fe Drive was called San Dieguito High School.

*The veterans have submitted a written proposal and have discussed it with the school district's staff. Thursday was their first opportunity to discuss their plans with the school board.*

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Last month, the veterans firstthoached the idea of the memorial with district administrators, who discouraged the idea, saying that a high school campus was probably not an appropriate place for a monument. Assistant Superintendent Eric Hall did tell the veterans they could take a formal proposal to the school board, though.

The board didn't vote on the proposal on Thursday. Rather, trustees asked that Superintendent Peggy Lynch draft a policy governing commemorative monuments and also establish a committee of San Dieguito parents, students and staff to collaborate with the veterans group.

The group's initial idea was to erect a memorial to recognize five alumni who were killed in Vietnam. Its members now would like to expand the memorial to include alumni killed in World War II and the Korean War.

An illustration submitted by the group shows a 5- to 6-foot-high black marble trionu-

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ment in the shape of the Washington Monument bearing the names of fallen alumni.

Trustees urged the memorial be elaborated swiftly.

"We don't want this to be stonewalled or delayed by any means," Trustee Barbara Groth said.

Building a memorial for fallen graduates is appropriate at the school, said David Gonzales, the memorial project's president.

"San Dieguito was the happiest place in their lives," he said. "If I was one of them, I sure would like to be remembered at San Dieguito."

Another speaker, Charlie Gibbs, told the board he was from San Dieguito's class of 1962.

Gibbs turned to the many high school students who were present in the board room.

"They were your age," he said of the veterans.

A third speaker, Jim Whalen of Del Mar, told the board he has put four sons through the school district and that a memorial is an important educational tool.

"I feel very strongly that the students understand the heritage of their country," he said. "I think a visible memorial is an extremely important educational tool to put a human face on them."

Trustee Joyce Dalessandro agreed.

"The history lesson is very clear," she said.

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