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## Veterans plan to expand memorial

by Andrea Newell  
Times Correspondent

Plans are currently in motion to build onto the Chaffee County Veterans Memorial at the Poncha Springs Visitor Center at the intersection of U.S. 50 and U.S. 285.

Dedicated on July 4, 2019, the memorial was created to honor Chaffee County veterans of the Korean and Vietnam wars. It stands near the location of a previous memorial built in 2002 and remodeled during construction.

The American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars organizations of Buena Vista and Salida and the Marine Corps League hope to add to the memorial park with a couple of projects.

The first allows Chaffee County residents to buy a brick and dedicate it to relatives who were veterans from the Civil War to present times. The veteran must be or must have been a resident of the county and must have been honorably discharged.

According to American Legion Post No. 55 Cmdr. Darryl Atherton, there were about 85 bricks before the holidays. Brian Berger, Poncha Springs town administrator, reports 93 bricks have been set with another 29 waiting to be installed.

“The Town of Poncha Springs Public Works crew has done an amazing job installing the bricks, taking care in installation and pride in what they look like,” Berger said.

The second project involves putting a tank on a static display at the memorial.



Photo by Andrea Newell

The Chaffee County Veterans Memorial at the Poncha Springs Visitor Center at the intersection of U.S. 50 and U.S. 285 is planned for expansion.

“We think this would make the memorial stand out even more and be good for the county, to let people know we respect and honor all our veterans,” Atherton said during public comment at the Jan. 10 Buena Vista town trustees meeting.

“This would catch the eye of those that go by there. They may stop, especially if they are veterans or have kids that want to see the tank close up, and they could also see the bricks of all the veterans that have purchased bricks and family members that have purchased bricks to honor Chaffee County veterans that are no longer with us.”

Both projects have been

spearheaded by Marine Corps League member Dana Nachtrieb. After living in Alaska for 35 years, he and his wife returned to Chaffee County.

“The veterans memorial there was nothing but a pipe,” Nachtrieb said. “We’ve changed it a lot. I went around and talked to all three municipalities and the county commissioners, and they bought the (flag) poles. The concrete and concrete work were donated.

“Now, we’re doing the bricks to honor all the veterans. The VFW post here in Salida paid for the two monoliths out there, one for the Korean War and one for the Vietnam War. The monoliths

have the names of Chaffee County veterans who gave their all in each of these wars.”

Atherton said Berger has been in contact with the U.S. Army TACOM (Tank-Automotive & Armaments Command) about obtaining an M41 Walker Bulldog tank. The total cost for the tank is \$21,372.49.

Veteran organizations in Chaffee County plan to ask each of the town governments if they would consider donating one-fourth of the total amount.

If the towns accept, they will approach the county commissioners with the same request.

That would come to a donation of \$5,343.12 per entity. This would be an entirely county-based contribution, with none of the funds coming from state or federal government.

Poncha Springs has given the green light for the project. Decisions are still awaited from Buena Vista and Salida.

Late in the Jan. 10 town trustee meeting, Buena Vista Town Treasurer Philip Puckett told the board that the Town of Buena Vista had contributed to the memorial in the past, and there would be room for this size donation in their current budget.

But given the high demand for community grants – they put in about \$55,000 that is split among roughly 20 different organizations – Puckett wasn’t as certain about the contribution amount.

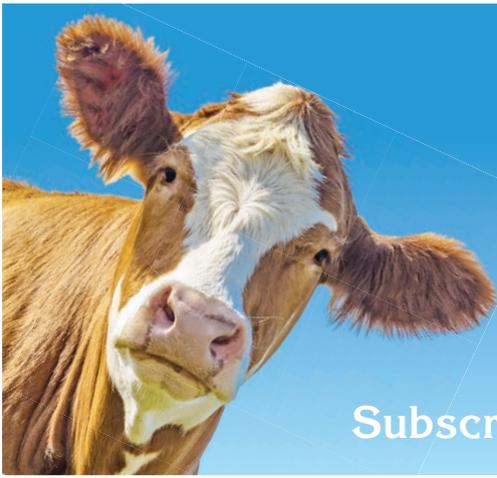
“Typically, when we try to cost share across the county, we base it a little bit off of population because all of our budgets are a bit different,” he said. “I get that \$5,000 or \$5,100 is not a huge amount, but it’s pretty sizable when you compare it to our community grants, and that process will be kicking off soon.”

Mayor Libby Fay and Trustee Mark Jenkins said they were in favor of providing support, especially in terms of adjusting the amount based on population.

Town Administrator Lisa Parnell-Rowe said she would get in touch with Salida and Poncha Springs to discuss the idea. The decision was tabled for the next meeting.

“The projects have created a space that veterans can be

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