

Veterans group requests changes to Mid County Park

Proposed ideas include new name and addition of reflection garden

BY ADRIENNE MARIE MAYFIELD
amayfield@vagazette.com

A group of veterans want to change the name of a local park and build a reflection garden to honor Vietnam War veterans.

The project was proposed to the James City County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday by the Williamsburg area chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America.

The group wants to change the name of Mid County Park to Veterans Memorial Park, move an existing memorial and add the garden.

The garden would be planted in open fields near the park's current Vietnam War memorial, which bears the names of 13 dead or missing Vietnam War veterans from James City County, said Jim Icenhour. Icenhour served in Vietnam as a pilot from May 1969 to April 1970 and is a member of the chapter's board of directors.

"There's nothing there now. It's under-used," said Tom Monahan, chapter president and Vietnam-era veteran who served in the Navy.

Other changes would include moving the current memorial to a sidewalk to make it more visible. It's currently located near a drainage ditch, making it hard to visit after rain, Icenhour said.

The veterans would also like to add benches and lighting to make the area a place of reflection. Visiting memo-

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— Jim Icenhour, Vietnam Veterans of America board member

rials can be very therapeutic for Vietnam War veterans who did not receive a good homecoming after the war, Icenhour said.

"(The Vietnam War) was a pretty brutal experience, and what was really brutal was the treatment (veterans) got when they got home," Icenhour said. "For a lot of these guys it's really been difficult."

Project planning is in the beginning stages, but the veterans hope to pay for the changes through donations, grants and volunteer work. Several businesses and community members have already volunteered their time and services to get the memorial moved.

The proposal will go through the James City County Parks and Recreation advisory board before coming back to the Board of Supervisors, said County Administrator Bryan Hill.

"I think there's going to be pretty good support for renaming it," Icenhour said. "I think it would be a nice thing to do for all of our veterans."

Mayfield can be reached at 757-298-5828.

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PHOTO BY JIM ICENHOUR

Local Vietnam veterans chapter hosts tour

The Williamsburg Chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America recently hosted a visit to Jamestown Settlement for about 20 disabled veterans from the McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond. Members of the chapter met their fellow veterans and accompanied them on the tour, which was conducted by two Jamestown Settlement volunteers who are veterans themselves. The chapter paid the admission fees and provided lunch for their guests. Pictured, from left, are Bill Truax, Floyd Loveland, Beck Truax, Nichole Black and chapter president Tom Monahan.