



City of Kerman

"Community Comes First"

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KERMAN/BIOLA VETERANS GROUPS JOIN WITH CITY OF KERMAN TO REFURBISH OLD FARM HOUSE FOR VETERANS' MEETING PLACE

A few months ago several Veteran organizations from the community of Kerman met with Kerman City Manager, Ron Manfredi in search of a permanent meeting place for their organizations. They also harbored a vague notion of establishing a Veterans Memorial District in the vain of the Clovis Memorial District. It seems that a generous landlord, Joe Boyd, who had free of charge, allowed the Kerman American Legion Westland Post 355 to use his office and warehouse space was anxious to lease out the space and gave the group notice. Boyd has since allowed the American Legion to stay longer but he also is looking for a paying tenant. After a couple of meetings, Biola area Veterans organizations had joined the group and the meetings began to focus on long and short term goals. The long-term goal remained establishing a Veterans Memorial District (VMD) similar to the extremely successful Clovis VMD. However after visiting the Clovis VMD, while being extremely impressed with the organization and leadership of the District, City Manager explained that Veterans faced a long and difficult road in establishing such a District. Under California Military and Veterans Code – Section 1260 1260-1266 Chapter 2. County and City Buildings, a district could be formed which would entail establishing boundaries; placing the issue on the ballot and having the local area residents impose a tax upon themselves. As Manfredi explained it: "it doesn't seem like now is the best time to ask folks to assess themselves a new tax to create a District even for a great cause like our Veterans need for a semi-permanent location which is pretty much immediate".

The Veterans began focusing on an old farm house on 35 acres the City had recently acquired for future park expansion. The property is currently leased out for farming but the house has been abandoned for a number of years. The Veterans latched on to the idea of raising funds and building materials to refurbish the house. American Legion Post 355, Commander from 2009 to '11 Parker Brown commented: "we have a number of local veterans who have skills that are very applicable to this project and they want to work on this. I am confident that we can gather the support of the community and region to make this a reality". Once complete the project will be used to: house local Veterans organization offices, meetings, various small events, dinners/gatherings, display historical military memorabilia and for the display and presentation of materials and information for various veterans' programs and benefits.

The house which is on South Siskiyou Avenue on the outskirts of the City is about 1500 sq. ft with a garage which will be enclosed. On June 1st the City Council approved a seven-year lease, for one dollar a year, leasing the house to the Post 355 who is acting as an umbrella organization for the several other participating Veterans and Vets support groups. The non-farm surrounding area will be developed into a yard and parking lot. According to Manfredi the Veterans have not forgotten their long-term goal of establishing a Memorial District; they have only placed it on the back burner. "In the future the City will still develop a park on the vast majority of the property and we may even use a few acres at the south end for industrial development. The long-term vision is to realize the development of a Veterans Memorial District with a new, much larger building adjacent to a beautiful City park. But the District is something the vets will have to work on independently and garner strong community support. "

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In coming American Legion Post 355 Commander, Mildred Wright-Pearson described it in this manner: “we are going to demonstrate to the larger community what we can do with this old house and then we are going to promote the long-term goal of a Memorial District to better serve veterans and their families. But we are going to really need the help of the community to bring this to fruition”.

All parties understand that substantial and expensive improvements need to be made to the house before any of the planned uses and activities is realized. Kerman’s principal, residential builder and developer of the last 20 years, Mitch Covington, RM Covington has volunteered time to provide ideas to the Veterans and assist them with determining the various materials and resources they will need to complete the project. “This is an old house; it’s going to take some time and resources” noted Covington, “but it’s structurally sound. I am confident that not only building supply businesses will step forward with donations but so will the construction and building trades. Our veterans deserve no less.” Covington further explained that not only would donations of cash and building materials be needed but major appliances and furnishing would be required as well.

While the Kerman American Legion Westland Post 355 and the Kerman Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 5470 have taken the lead; the project will also include other veterans and veterans support groups such as: Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5845, 11th District (Biola); American Legion Riders Chapter 355, Kerman; Sons of the American Legion, Squadron 355; Auxiliary Unit 355 and possibly others.

New Kerman Mayor Gary Yep sees this project as very typical of Kerman’s community spirit and pride. “The City of Kerman has a long history of working with our school district and businesses on projects that benefit and entertain the entire community. We understand as a small community that volunteerism and partnerships are fundamental to success. Time and time again this community steps up and delivers. I am very proud that the City can act as a catalyst; but the real key to success will be the determination of the Veteran groups and generosity of the regions business community”.

The Kerman American Legion Westland Post 355 is an established 501C 3 non-profit organization set-up to receive tax deductible donations

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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