

Editorial

Another skirmish in Viet War history

If everyone had a "do over" or mulligan, there would probably be a better way to propose building a memorial to all of the state's veterans who died in the Vietnam War.

Unfortunately, the way the idea evolved in Coventry did more to divide those who should be in favor of such memorials for veterans than it did to unite them.

Jean Risley, a local woman whose brother died in the war, proposed erecting a memorial to all 612 of the Connecticut service personnel who died in that conflict.

She first approached the school system in Coventry, but was advised school property wasn't the best location for such a memorial.

So she then approached the town council and found support for the idea.

Things may have evolved more smoothly if either school officials or members of the town council had referred Risley to the town's Veterans Memorial Commission for input before adopting a position on the request.

There is nothing wrong with Risley's idea per se. Those from the state of Connecticut who sacrificed their lives in Vietnam certainly deserve a monument in their honor. And a design based on the Vietnam Memorial in Washington is perfectly acceptable.

And, though it may partly be a control issue on the part of the town's Veterans Memorial Commission, their argument that the memorial would be more suitable if it were placed in Hartford or Rocky Hill near the state's veterans home is a valid position on two counts.

The first is that a memorial to all of those veterans in the state who died should be in a central location. The second is that the roads leading to and from Coventry's town common are not adequate to handle a significant increase in traffic if the new memorial attracts a large number of visitors.

On one hand, an increase in the number of visitors to Coventry could boost the local economy, which could benefit local businesses and result in more revenue for the town. But that increase in visitors could cause traffic nightmares and possibly result in more accidents on narrow roads not designed to be main thoroughfares.

There is still time to consider an alternate, more accessible location in Coventry, if that is determined to be the best location, and there is also time to consult with state veterans officials to see if a more central venue is available, or more appropriate for the proposed memorial.