

# Coventry woman asks town to help remember Vietnam veterans

By Lee Sawyer

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COVENTRY — It's not every Town Council meeting that brings a contingent of veterans roaring in on Harleys.

But when word came in that Jean Risley, a local resident who lost a brother in the Vietnam War, would be seeking support from the town for a war memorial, members of the American Legion Riders, Post 14, rode to Coventry to support her.

"We're here to help her all the way through," said Bob Caine, a member of the group that's based in the Rockville section of Vernon.

As it turned out, Risley's request — that the town submit a letter of intent showing it was ready to help

find a spot for a memorial, wasn't a tough sell, getting the unanimous approval of the council.

Risley says she'll use grants and donations to fund the black granite monument, which will list the names of the 612 Connecticut servicemen who lost their lives in Vietnam.

"Some people have said that now, with the war in Iraq, Vietnam will be forgotten. If you lost someone in Vietnam, it will never be forgotten," Risley said.

Risley's brother, Robert Tillquist, was a combat medic for the Army when he perished.

Once a design is finalized — Risley envisions a 5-foot "V" fashioned from granite slabs — she hopes the monument will find a place next to the others on the town

green so that people will remember the sacrifices of people like her brother.

As for the support of the riders, Risley said she was extremely grateful.

The riders have promised they'll continue to help, and plan to organize rides to raise funds for the project, according to Caine.

To make the memorial project a success, Risley will need the support of the community as well, including donations.

Those interested in helping may call Jean Risley at 742-8841 or e-mail her at [rwriskley@snet.net](mailto:rwriskley@snet.net).

After the council voted and the riders roared away, it was back to business as usual, as members watched a presentation on the activities and goals of the Coventry

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Economic Development Commission, and approved an ordinance merging the Recreation and Arts Commissions.

Bill Jobbagy, vice chairman of the development commission, outlined the aims of the group, including adding jobs, adding to the tax base, marketing the town to businesses, partnering with developers, and using and improving physical

infrastructure — such as five mill sites on the Mill Brook.

In other news, Town Manager John Elsesser announced that the fireworks show rained out at CoventryFest will be fired off on Thursday, Aug. 3, at Patriot's Park. Music by Beatles tribute band Abbey Road will start at 7 p.m., and the fireworks at 9 p.m.

As an aside, Elsesser warned council members and the public to not be alarmed by the sight of young people with video cameras at local intersections. "They're not terrorists," he joked, "they're UConn students."

The University of Connecticut students are working on a class project studying traffic patterns, Elsesser explained.