

Site search continues for Vietnam memorial

By **DAVID HINCHEY**
Chronicle Staff Writer

COVENTRY — A Coventry woman is still searching for a site to put a Vietnam War memorial after Coventry school officials rejected the idea of putting it on school grounds.

The town council, however, is expected to discuss a memorial location at its regular meeting at 7:30 p.m. in the town hall annex.

Jean Risley, who lost her brother Robert Tillquist during the war, was looking to build a memorial in his honor and for the other 611 Connecticut servicemen who lost their lives in the war.

The design of the memorial would be similar to the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C., and Risley had hoped to put it in front of Capt. Nathan Hale Middle School, which is why she approached Superintendent Donna Bernard.

The two, along with treasurer Paul Jatkowski, met Oct. 13 to discuss the monument on school grounds, which the school's administrative council rejected, saying the memorial would be a better fit on town property.

"Unfortunately, after extensive deliberation, the consensus of the Coventry Public Schools' Administrative Council is to recommend that war memorials not be located on school campuses. The administrators agreed that this type of memorial is more appropriate for town or state property," Bernard wrote in a letter dated Nov. 7.

Bernard said the school district certainly supports and honors all veterans and certainly the 612

Connecticut servicemen who died in the Vietnam War.

Bernard said administrators had concerns about equity and that if they allowed a Vietnam War memorial, they would also have to allow one for the Korean War or World War II. "We don't want to be the hub of war memorials for multiple wars," Bernard said.

The school currently has a "612 Memorial" — a Vietnam War plaque — in the shared lobby of Capt. Nathan Hale Middle School and Coventry High School by the auditorium.

Bernard said after the school put up the "612 Memorial," it had not been approached by any veterans to ask for a memorial in their honor.

Risley said she had not gotten the letter from Bernard until after she had returned from her yearly pilgrimage to Washington D.C., where she meets up with servicemen in her brother's platoon every Veterans Day.

She said she is going to approach the board of education, and has asked to be put on the next meeting's agenda.

So far, Risley has registered her organizing group as a 501(c3) organization, so donations might be tax deductible, pending a ruling from the Internal Revenue Service.

Risley has raised more than \$6,000 — nearly a quarter of the \$28,000 price tag for a memorial.

To make a donation, send a check to C.V.V.M.C. (Connecticut Vietnam Veterans Memorial Committee) care of Paul Jatkowski, treasurer, 91 Upton Drive, Coventry, CT 06238.

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