

Honor auditorium's purpose

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Contributing Writers

The Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge — Kansas Chapter, Inc. (VBoB) wish to express our concern regarding the seemingly expedited plans for the Peace Memorial Auditorium in Manhattan and make three requests. We have several VBoB members in Riley County who are represented by the memorial. We also want to give another voice to the veterans the memorial honors who served this great nation during World War II, some making the greatest sacrifice of all.

VBoB's major concern is that the original organizations that provided leadership to build the Peace Memorial Auditorium were not included, or consulted, in the current decision-making process to repurpose the auditorium as offices for the Manhattan Parks and Recreation Department.

Much of the leadership and support to build this memorial was provided by veterans organizations such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), the American Legion, the Daughters of Veterans and others. Our research shows the original Memorial Committee was represented by about 45 civic organizations. The major emphasis in building this memorial was to honor the 2,610 men and women

of Riley County who served during World War II and the 101 who paid the ultimate price for freedom that we enjoy even to this day.

The Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge-Kansas Chapter request the City Commission to:

1. Perform a detailed study on the history of the Peace Memorial Auditorium — how and why it came to be, what its intended purpose was and what it represents to the community and means to the veterans it honors.

“... the memorial was built to honor World War II veterans and to serve the Riley County community — not to become a government office building!”

This study should include input from the organizations previously mentioned that provided the leadership and support to build the memorial as well as the public's input.

We should never forget that the memorial was built to honor World War II veterans and to serve the Riley County community — not to become a government office building! A good example of its intended use is the luncheon following the Veterans Day parade.

2. Conduct a feasibility study, if not already done, of other

locations for new Parks and Recreation offices or expansion at its current location, and make the study available to the public. It is concerning to spend the monies stated in the media if there is a less obtrusive and more cost effective option considering what is being gained by the proposal.

3. Perform a cost analysis, if not already done, to restore the Peace Memorial Auditorium to its original grandeur and include needed upgrades to make the facility more appealing to those who require a facility of this type. This is still a very nice facility, but is suffering from a lack of updates. Once it is restored, Manhattan and Riley County could proudly celebrate the rededication by the City Commission. Perhaps the

Manhattan Municipal Band could play patriotic music on the newly refurbished stage. Dedicate a new memorial plaque in the foyer that would prominently display the names of the Riley County veterans who served during World War II and the 101 veterans who gave their lives. Our research shows this was the original intent of the memorial.

Jim Sharp, 508 Wickham, is past president of Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge. Topeka resident Mark W. Collins is its current president.