



Foundation Board VP and Construction Committee Head George Hall (far right) is showing Groundbreakers "How to get the job done!"

L to R:

- Mayor Leonardis
- Founder Mike Frangadakis
- Foundation Board Advisor Secretary Francis J. Harvey, 19th Secretary of the U.S. Army
- Santa Clara County Supervisor Mike Wasserman
- Foundation President Major General Kent Hillhouse, US Army (Ret.)
- Former Mayor and Council Member Marico Sayoc
- Foundation Gifts Committee Member, Former Assistant Secretary of the US Army, and Marine Colonel William Peacock
- Foundation Vice President & Construction Committee Head George Hall

America's Veterans Are Not the Only Ones Deserving of *Honor, Respect, and Gratitude...*

*By Ellen Manzo, Board Member,
Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation*

When a Santa Clara County Supervisor; Former Secretary of the Army and two Assistant Secretaries of the Army; a Mayor and four prior Mayors from Los Gatos; a former Mayor from Cupertino; two Founders of nearby Veterans Foundations; first responders to including a Police Chief, Police Captain, Police Chaplain, and Police Officer, and Santa Clara County Fire Chief; several CEOs; a retired Army General; a mother of a local 9/11 hero; board members; Town employees and a former Town Manager; representatives from the #1 construction concern in northern California; a publisher for community magazines, photographers and members of the press; a memorial architect; parents of military service members and caring citizens gather at the same venue for an affair, it's apparent that something hot is about to happen.

And that's exactly what occurred at *The Flame of Liberty Veterans Memorial* groundbreaking at the Los Gatos Civic Center on Friday, January 4th. The event represented a significant milestone for the Veterans Memorial and Support Foundation board of directors who began the effort of campaigning for a veterans memorial in 2012.

Santa Clara County Supervisor Mike Wasserman was present for the event and recalls discussing the suggestion of the veterans memorial concept with U.S. Army and California Guard Service Member Mike Frangadakis, ten years ago.

Also present for the event was former Los Gatos Mayor Steve Rice who, on November 5, 2012, exercised his mayoral prerogative at the first presentation ever made by the newly formed Foundation board to the Town Council when he rendered his motion for vote with the Council members:

Mayor Rice: "And I don't think I've done this entire year as Mayor but I'm going to take mayoral prerogative at this point and I'm going to move that we authorize the Foundation to develop and submit for Council review and approval two to four proposals for the location and design for the veterans memorial at the Los Gatos Civic Center incorporating the Pageant Grounds, the Civic Center deck [plaza], and/or the front lawn and the flagpoles. Those in favor signify in favor by saying Aye?" [All five Council members voted "Aye".] "The motion carries unanimously and we look forward to seeing what you bring back in the very near future." [Loud applause from those present in the Town Chambers.]

Two 2019 Council members were aboard the Council for the 2012 presentation and have had the opportunity to watch the events that occurred over the multi-year journey that followed – Mayor Stephen Leonardis and former Mayor and current Councilwoman Barbara Spector.

Mayor Leonardis was present for the celebratory event and delivered these remarks...

"Welcome to honor. We are here because you were there... defending our Freedom, our Constitution, and our way of life with your service and sacrifices. On behalf of the greatest nation in the history of planet earth and this great Town we call Los Gatos, I sincerely thank you for your efforts in bringing this tribute and your continued dedication to the preservation of the great ideals which make America the flagship model of democracy, justice and equality for all women and men. God bless this day. And God bless America."

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Photo compliments of Carol Musser.



Mayor Steve Leonardis [R] delivers remarks while Santa Clara County Supervisor Mike Wasserman [L] and Foundation President Kent Hillhouse watch on.



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Foundation President, Major General Kent Hillhouse US Army (Ret.) thinks back on the years of work the Foundation board has delivered to arrive at this pivotal accomplishment. Photo compliments of Clyde Horn. — with Kent Hillhouse.

The Honorable Francis J Harvey, 19th Secretary for the United States Army, has been a member of the Foundation’s Advisory Board since its inception. Secretary Harvey acknowledged the Foundation team’s success on this triumphant accomplishment and stated that he had additional remarks saved for the future dedication ceremony. Secretary Harvey brings his business expertise from serving on 15 boards combined with his military expertise and network of resources to the Foundation board’s table.

Finally, Major General Kent Hillhouse US Army (Ret.) and Foundation President addressed the congregation and launched his comments with a famous quotation...

“A nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces, but also by the men it honors – the men it remembers.’ That was a quote delivered by John F. Kennedy during his administration... And I think were Kennedy to deliver the same quote today, he’d alter his statement by referring to the ‘men and women’ that nation honors and remembers, for women also serve in today’s military.”

In response to the November 2012 Town Council unanimous vote rendered by former Mayor Rice and the Town Council, the Foundation board launched a national arts challenge for the veterans memorial venue that appeared to have the popular vote from the Council – the Town Civic Center plaza. The Foundation then presented its plans on November 4, 2014 to the Council after conducting two years of research, artist renderings reviews, deliberation, and financial analysis. For a multitude of reasons, the Town offered a new location in response to the 2014 presentation – and in August 2015, committed the Civic Center Redwood Grove real estate upon which to build the memorial. The Foundation Board launched a second arts challenge to artists, this time with the Redwood Grove footprint, and secured a second round of new designs. The Foundation reran its evaluation process, and examined financial and construction requirements for the round two renderings.

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Police Chief Peter Decana and Police Captain Los Gatos Monte Sereno Clinton Tada, enjoy the festivities along with Former Mayor of Los Gatos and Council Member Marico Sayoc. Photo compliments of Clyde Horn.

The Foundation invited the Civic Center stakeholders, the Arts Commission, the public, and the Foundation board to weigh in and vote on the designs over a three-month period of time and brought the top two renderings and “all-in” final recommendation from the various constituencies before the Town Council. *The Flame of Liberty Veterans Memorial* design was approved for implementation on June 21, 2016. The Town Council later approved the final veterans memorial application on December 5, 2017. Since then, the Board has been busy at work finalizing architectural plans and making the necessary provisions to secure building permits. The Town of Los Gatos awarded building permits to the Foundation board on December 20, 2018, an event that culminated in the groundbreaking celebration on behalf of the many volunteers following their near seven-year effort.

Devcon, the largest contractor in northern California, has volunteered to serve as the Foundation’s General Contractor to build the memorial. Devcon’s CEO, Gary Filizetti, is a Los Gatos resident, as are several of Devcon’s executives, and has personally made a significant contribution in support of the memorial. The groundbreaking event occurred on a Friday and Devcon had the construction site fenced and ready for work on Monday. Don’t blink; you might miss something! They’re on the move.

The Flame of Liberty Memorial plans to deliver honor, respect, gratitude and healing to the veterans who have served this nation. In addition, it will honor first responders and two local 9/11 heroes. Foundation members are currently running their Liberty Capital Campaign to raise the necessary funds to support the memorial, two years of maintenance and the launch of programs to help veterans. The memorial unveiling is expected to occur mid-year.

Would it be appropriate to suggest that there are Foundation volunteers - veterans of this initiative - who, following this journey, are also due honor, respect and gratitude on behalf of our community? After all, how many non-profits can claim the commitment and passion as demonstrated by this all-volunteer team over a seven-year period to seize a goal? One can only conclude that the Veterans Foundation must be onto something very exciting for the future of Silicon Valley.

Parties can demonstrate honor, respect, and gratitude by participating in this historic tribute through major gift and paver donations. Visit <https://simplebooklet.com/theflameoflibertymemorial> to donate.

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