

Sept. 11 memorial gets OK

RTM approves \$556K gift to build monument

By Ken Borsuk

A memorial in Cos Cob Park to honor the victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks is now officially approved.

The Representative Town Meeting has voted to accept a gift of \$566,457 to cover the cost of building the waterfront memorial — two glass towers bearing the names of the 32 people with ties to Greenwich who were killed in the attacks.

The project has received enthusiastic endorsements from Greenwich's local, state and congressional representatives and passed through all necessary land-use agencies. The RTM's approval, by a vote of 168-8-10, was the last step in the process. James Ritman, co-president of the Greenwich Community Projects Fund Inc., which raised the money for the project, said he hopes construction will begin later this month or in early April.

"This is something for the town, for the families and for future generations," Ritman said. The memorial is to be in an open area with free access, providing a quiet surroundings for observance and contemplation, he said.

While there was some surprise among supporters that eight members voted against the project, there was a cheer when the final vote was announced at Monday's RTM meeting.

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Karen Sadik-Khan, chairman of the RTM Parks and Recreation Committee, called the project "quite stunning," while Finance Committee Chairman Michael Warner said there is strong community support.

RTM Moderator Pro Tempore Joan Caldwell was among the "no" votes. She said there were several reasons for her opposition, including the RTM's denial several years ago for a labyrinth that would have served as a memorial. She said she did not feel it was right to approve this project when the other memorial had been rejected. Additionally, Caldwell said there were too many memorials in town being donated as gifts, noting a prior effort by the town to stop accepting gifts of memorial benches.

Caldwell also criticized the design, saying it would obstruct the view of the water, and said she has heard from residents all over town questioning whether Cos Cob Park is the proper location.

Money for the memorial has been privately raised and the gift includes a \$25,000 endowment for maintenance and insurance against vandalism. Ritman said there is an effort to also fund an

educational component for students brought to the memorial — an effort made easier by the RTM's approval, he said.

"I think the approval will rally even more people who might have been questioning whether or not this will get done," Ritman said. "This has the town's support and we have the money for the actual construction so more and more people are going to want to be a part of this."

Cos Cob Park is expected to be formally dedicated by the end of the month, and Ritman said they are considering four bids for construction. The goal is to have the memorial complete by July or August, in time for the next observance of the Sept. 11 anniversary, he said.

Several family members of 9/11 victims attended the meeting to show their support. Afterward, they said they are grateful that the memorial, which has been years in the making, will now be a reality.

"It's a memorial of pure beauty," said Nassima Wachtler, whose son Gregory was killed in the attacks. "I feel that this is more than appropriate. It's correct and it's decent. I don't know how anyone could have voted



File photo

Greenwich resident Ingrid Lenihan, left, looks at a rendering held by architect Nicholas Rotondi of the proposed Sept. 11 memorial. Lenihan lost her husband, Joseph Lenihan, in the 2001 terrorist attacks.

against it. It's a beautiful place and the memorial is a thing of beauty."

Her husband Paul added it was a relief to both of them that this is finally happening.

"This is the result of so much hard work, and it's going to be a beautiful memorial," he said.

The Wachtlers traveled from New Jersey for the meeting and pledged they would be there for the unveiling later this year.

Sally Duval, who lost her brother Teddy Maloney in the attacks, said it was hard to believe the project is actually going forward.

"It was definitely an emo-

tional moment to hear that 'yes' vote," Duval said. "We're very relieved."

Duval is a longtime supporter of the memorial and a board member of the Greenwich Community Projects Fund. She said she was particularly excited about the educational components of the project.

"I think remembering and being able to use something in our town to learn about that historic day is very important," Duval said. "This is a museum right in their backyard they can go to for our generation's Pearl Harbor."

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