RECOMMENDATION:

The Parks and Recreation Commission recommends Council approve the proposed Veterans Memorial Project at the Lake Park as proposed.

DISCUSSION:

Background: Per the City’s Arts in Public Places Policy, this item has been placed on the City Council’s “Consent Calendar.” On September 26, 2006, the City Council and the Parks and Recreation Commission heard a presentation by a group of Atascadero veterans to construct an “all wars” memorial in the Sunken Gardens. The City Council directed that the Parks and Recreation Commission would oversee the project’s public review process. The memorial is an excellent idea to honor local veterans from the Atascadero Unified School District area from all wars who lost their lives in service of our country. The memorial would include a visually powerful bronze statute, designed by artist Mark Greenaway, with a backdrop of a granite memorial wall approximately 35-45’ft. in length. There is little doubt that a memorial to be located in Atascadero is widely supported. Chaired by Col. Bill Hatch, the project team is an all volunteer effort and no public funds are being used to construct the memorial. A draft maintenance agreement (Attachment G), outlines the obligations of the veteran’s group to maintain the memorial. The veteran's group has agreed to maintain the memorial. At this time, the veteran's group does not have the ability to actually execute the agreement with the City because they are not yet a legal entity. They are currently working on that issue and will have it resolved by the time a building permit is issued. The final agreement will be brought back to the City Council prior to the building permit issuance for approval.

On November 2, 2006, the Parks and Recreation Commission held a public hearing to consider the proposal for a veteran’s memorial in the Sunken Gardens. After much public testimony, the Commission had concerns about the scale of the project and the Sunken Gardens location. The Commission took action to form an ad hoc committee of stakeholders to evaluate the location alternatives for the Sunken Gardens, as well as other potential memorial sites around the City. On November 30, 2006, the ad hoc committee met at City Hall to review the memorial placement. The advantages and disadvantages for many possible sites were weighed. The committee ultimately came
to a unanimous decision that the corner of Atascadero Lake Park at Highway 41 and Portola Road was the best location for the memorial. This location was acceptable to the Veteran’s Committee. A volunteer engineer, Mr. Van den Eikoff, has volunteered to design the plans for the location and placement of the memorial at the corner of State Highway 41 and Portola road at the Lake Park.

On February 15, 2007, the Parks and Recreation Commission considered the item again and took public input on the project. The Commission voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the project as proposed by the veteran's committee.

Some considerations to be taken into account by Council are:

- Input from The Veteran’s Committee on the project background and significance.
- Public input
- The recommendation of the Parks and Recreation Commission to approve the project.
- The recommendation from the five-member Arts in Public Places Committee, an advisory committee to the Parks and Recreation Commission. A copy of their report from the non-voting chair, Barbie Butz is attached. The Arts in Public Places Committee recommended to the Commission, on a 4-1 vote, to reject the proposal as submitted. The Committee also voted on a motion as follows: “The concept of a war memorial project is accepted by all members of the Art and Public Places Committee at the site discussed, and the Committee unanimously agreed it would be willing to assist the Veteran’s Memorial Committee in considering proposals from multiple artists. Recommend the project be finalized by November, 2007.”
- It has been suggested by the Arts Committee that a new process be implemented to select a new design for the memorial. The City’s Arts in Public Places Policy does not provide for such an alternative process, and more importantly, the Veteran’s Committee has not agreed to support a different project under those conditions. The Veteran’s Committee has requested approval of this memorial as proposed.
- City staff has reviewed the proposed project and is recommending its approval. The memorial project will fit well into the Lake Park Master Plan and can be maintained by the veteran’s group with volunteer support. City staff has no concerns with the design or aesthetics of the memorial. Any concerns of that nature would certainly not rise to the level where denial of the memorial would be warranted.
- If approved, the Veteran's Committee would submit construction plans to the City, and proceed through the normal building permit process. The maintenance agreement will be finalized and executed.

The veteran’s group will make a presentation on the project to the City Council if requested.
FISCAL IMPACT:

The construction costs of the memorial are estimated to be approximately $200,000 which will be privately funded. The memorial maintenance costs are to be covered by the veteran’s group, governed by an agreement with the City.

ATTACHMENTS:

A- Project Application
B- Project Description/ Background provided by A.J. Fonzi
C- Arts in Public Places Committee Report
D- Memo from Arts Committee member, Joe Ramirez
F- Arts in Public Places Policy
G- Draft Maintenance Agreement