

Officials push for Sussex cemetery for war veterans

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Father Boland, Mayor Vic Marotta, County Clerk Jeff Parrott and Wallkill Valley Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1002 President John Harrigan are encouraged by the news that the new veterans' cemetery will soon be a reality.

"We'll Get It Done," has become the mantra of The Wallkill Valley Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1002 President John Harrigan, his fellow officers and members.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF VERNON PAOLINI



The audience reacts to the news of the future veterans' cemetery in Sussex County.

Striving for a final resting place in Sussex County since 2008, the vets' dream is slowly becoming a reality. A 60 acre parcel of land next to Sussex Vo-Tech High School in Sparta has been the Vernon-based veterans group's focus in establishing a one and only veterans' cemetery in Sussex County. The land, owned by the Sussex County Freeholders has already cleared the first step of acquisition.

At a Dec. 14 meeting in Newton, Harrigan and roughly 80 others received the good news. Among the 80 individuals were supporters Father John Boland, of St Francis de Sales Church, which serves as a meeting place and home base for the Vietnam vets group, Jeff Parrott, county clerk, and Vernon mayor Vic Marotta.

"We're trying to make this cemetery a reality on our own, without direct help from federal or state agencies," Harrigan stated. "However, a little help would be great," he laughed.

The vets have initiated massive fund raising efforts, from can shaking at Vernon's Mac and Lindy's to bake sales and donation cans placed at area businesses throughout Sussex County. The veterans are

invoking the help of area businesses. First on board is Lynnes Nissan, a car dealership in Stanhope that hopes to soon join the fund raising campaign. Fellow veteran Walt Hazelman of the Vietnam group stressed that the future cemetery is for all veterans and their spouses, not only those who served in Vietnam.

The closest state veterans' cemetery is the General Doyle located 150 miles away in Wrightstown, N.J. Two federal veterans' cemeteries, the Beverly and Finns Point, also located in South Jersey, are fully occupied.

"The future cemetery will have the ability to inter about 15,000 veterans and their spouses," Harrigan mentioned. "It will be a simple, beautiful tribute to Sussex County residents who served their country."

For more information on the Wallkill Valley Vietnam Veterans of America, the future cemetery, or to get involved, call 973-271-2413 or visit vva1002.org.