

NEWS

Holocaust memorial gets key support in Niskayuna



Paul Nelson

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A new rendering of the proposed Capital Region Jewish Holocaust Memorial that was posted on the Town of Niskayuna's website in spring 2019.
Town of Niskayuna

NISKAYUNA - Plans to build a Holocaust memorial on Route 7 moved a step closer to becoming reality with the approval earlier this week from the town Planning Board.

The panel voted unanimously Monday night to grant final site plan approval for the construction of the Capital District Jewish Holocaust Memorial on two acre of land east of Pearse Road and Most Holy Redeemer Cemetery. The land was donated by the Albany Roman Catholic Diocese, which operates the cemetery.

"I would say you would see ground-breaking within two years, " Niskayuna Planner Laura Robertson said Tuesday.

She said building permit plans for the memorial must now be submitted to the town.

Once the plans are in, town planning officials and the professional team of experts who designed the memorial would meet.

Barring any concerns about the project, construction could begin soon after.

Dr. Michael Lozman, a Colonie orthodontist who was the driving force behind creation of the memorial, thanked the lawyer, engineer and architects who volunteer their time and skills on the project.

"They felt deep in their heart that they were doing something of significant value, trying to improve our society, trying to show that something of educational value may help fight against prejudice and bigotry and hatred, and I commend them for that," he told the crowd at Monday's meeting. He also thanked the Planning Board.

On Tuesday, Lozman declined to discuss what the memorial might cost, but stressed that the nonprofit Capital District Jewish Holocaust memorial's

fundraising committee would be continuing their efforts to raise the money to pay for the project.

He said the memorial is needed more now than ever in light of the rising tide of anti-Semitism and Holocaust deniers as well as the aging and death of Holocaust survivors.

I think it is particularly important to make sure that we do not forget, and that we learn from the past, so that we can all move forward together as a family," he added. "This is not going to be just a structure that is going to stand by itself, this is a memorial that's going to be used for the purpose of educating the public and students."

After the original design that included a box car and model gas chamber got pushback from residents at a public hearing, Lozman regrouped.

Neil Golub, head of Price Chopper, began coordinating meetings every couple of weeks with a dozen members from Lozman's Capital District Jewish Holocaust Memorial group and the Jewish Federation of Northeastern New York headed by Robert Kovach.

The group consulted architects, educators and the Anti-Defamation League's Holocaust education program.

They unveiled a redesigned memorial early last year and held two more public hearings.

The re-design by Dembling & Dembling Architects features six sides like the points of the Star of David. It includes quotes from local survivors and pebbles that visitors can place to pay their respect, a common tradition in Jewish cemeteries. An arch over the memorial exit will read "Never Again."

One panel on the memorial features a representation of a boxcar. Another panel is reminiscent of the fencing used at concentration camps. Quotes would also be included on each panel, which could be from local survivors.

Plans call for thick vegetation to serve as a buffer to reduce the impact on homeowners around the planned site, some of whom had opposed the location, citing the fact that they fought long and hard to keep the area residential.

Written by

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