

Albany diocese gives land over for Niskayuna Holocaust memorial

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Bishop Edward Scharfenberger, left, signs over the deed to a two-acre parcel of property for the future Holocaust Memorial in Niskayuna to Dr. Michael Lozman, president of the Capital District Jewish Holocaust Memorial, right, during a ceremony on Thursday, Aug. 20, 2020, at the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany Pastoral Center in Albany, N.Y. (Will Waldron/Times Union)

Will Waldron/Albany Times Union

Niskayuna — In June 2017, Michael Lozman, a Colonie orthodontist, told Albany Catholic diocese Bishop Edward Scharfenberger that he was tired of seeing so much bigotry - that he felt like the Holocaust was becoming ancient history.

“I told the bishop that I wanted to build a structure, a building, that would remind people of the consequences of hatred,” Lozman said.

Lozman, who is Jewish, wanted to build a Holocaust memorial. He asked the bishop if he could help.

On Thursday, three years after that first conversation, Scharfenberger and Most Holy Redeemer Cemetery answered by signing over the deed to a two-acre parcel of property to the Capital District Jewish Holocaust Memorial, a local nonprofit that will soon begin fundraising to build the Holocaust memorial that Lozman has longed for.

“There are so many positive things that will come from this,” Lozman said. “We are trying to build a memorial that speaks against prejudice and bigotry ... and the [Catholic] church has been a wonderful partner for us.”

The land is located near the Most Holy Redeemer Cemetery in Niskayuna on Route 7.

“I want to thank Dr. Lozman for coming to me with this project and for allowing the Diocese of Albany to partner with him in making his dream a reality,” Scharfenberger said in a statement. “From the outset, I recognized the power and potential of his plan for a local Holocaust Memorial. It will not only provide a sacred space to remember the millions of Jewish lives lost in the Holocaust but will also provide a place and platform for educating future generations so that the evils of that particular moment in history are never repeated.”

On June 20, 2019, the Niskayuna town board approved the special use permit, and the planning board later approved the final site plan and minor subdivision.

In February of this year, the planning board approved the site of the memorial after several public hearings and meetings with city officials, architects and engineers.

The layout of the memorial will feature six sides reminiscent of the points of the Star of David, and each panel will have quotes from local Holocaust survivors. One panel will have a representation of a boxcar, while another will be similar to the fencing used at concentration camps. There will also be pebbles that people visiting the memorial can place to pay their respect, which is tradition in Jewish cemeteries.

To exit the memorial, visitors will leave through a gate with the phrase, “Never again,” etched on it.

Niskayuna Planner Laura Robertson said once the organization collects the money needed to build the memorial, they can begin breaking ground.

Lozman said he expects the cost of the memorial to be around \$4.2 million.

“This is going to be a quality, beautiful memorial that is designed to send a very specific message and to be an educational facility as well,” Lozman said.

The education aspect is especially important, Lozman said, because it ensures that history will not repeat itself.

Hatred and bigotry, he said, “cannot coexist with a society such as ours.”

Written by

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