



**Honorable Mayor and Members of the Hermosa Beach City Council**

**REPORT ON WHETHER THE BLUE STAR MARKER PROGRAM WOULD BE APPLICABLE IN HERMOSA BEACH**

(Senior Recreation Supervisor Brian Sousa)

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**Recommended Action:**

Staff recommends City Council:

1. Receive and file a report regarding the Blue Star Memorial Program; and
2. Consider participation in the Blue Star Memorial Program and, if approved, select one of five location options presented (**Attachments 1 through 5**).

**Executive Summary:**

At its May 23, 2023 meeting, Councilmember Deto requested, and Councilmembers Jackson, and Saemann supported, directing staff to work with the Veterans Memorial Committee to consider whether the Blue Star Memorial Program, proposed by the Hermosa Beach Garden Club, would be applicable in Hermosa Beach. Staff completed an initial review with the Veterans Memorial Committee and recommends City Council receive and file a report regarding the program and consider participation in the Blue Star Memorial Program and approval of one of the five options presented in **Attachments 1 through 5**.

**Background:**

At its May 23, 2023 meeting, during public comment, the Hermosa Beach Garden Club (Garden Club) requested the City consider installation of a Blue Star Memorial Highway Marker through the Blue Star Memorial Program on the Community Center East Lawn along Pacific Coast Highway. Councilmember Deto requested, and Councilmembers Jackson and Saemann supported, directing staff to work with the Veterans Memorial Committee to consider whether the Blue Star Memorial Program, proposed by the Garden Club, would be applicable in Hermosa Beach.

The Blue Star Memorial Program (**Attachment 1**) was created by the National Garden Clubs organization approximately 80 years ago and serves to honor our nation's armed forces through the following:

- A Blue Star Highway Marker on highways and highway rest areas;

- A memorial marker on the grounds of national cemeteries, veteran administrative medical centers, or a civic location deemed appropriate; and
- A by-way marker in parks, historical sites, and other civic locations.

There are currently more than 3,000 such markers throughout the country. The State legislature has deemed Pacific Coast Highway as a Blue Star Memorial Highway.

The program requires a State, District, or local garden club to purchase the chosen marker. The Hermosa Beach Garden Club raised funds to purchase a Blue Star Highway Marker (Highway Marker).

***Past Board, Commission, and Council Actions***

Meeting Date	Description
<a href="#">May 23, 2023</a>	City Council directed staff to work with the Veterans Memorial Subcommittee to consider if the Blue Star Memorial Program proposed by the Hermosa Beach Garden Club would be applicable in Hermosa Beach.

**Discussion:**

Staff and the Veterans Memorial Committee reviewed the Garden Club’s proposed location for a Highway Marker and the steps required to formally install a Highway Marker on Pacific Coast Highway in Hermosa Beach. The Garden Club’s proposed location would be the Hermosa Beach Community Center east lawn.

The Veterans Memorial Committee expressed concern that it may be confusing to have two memorials in close proximity by two different community organizations. A letter from the Veterans Memorial Committee outlines five options in order of preference, for participation in the Blue Star Memorial Program (**Attachment 2**).

- Option 1: A Highway Marker on the northern corner of Greenwood Park (**Attachment 3**).
  - In 2000, a portion of Pacific Coast Highway California Highway 1, was designated as the Los Angeles County Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway and a sign is currently placed along the highway near Greenwood Park indicating this. However, staff confirmed would be no restrictions in adding a Blue Star Memorial Marker to this location. It would be at the discretion of the City Council.
- Option 2: If Council selects the Greenwood Park location, staff would recommend a by-way marker at ground level, instead of a Highway Marker, at this location. This option would be the least impactful to staff resources (**Attachment 4**).
- Option 3: A Highway Marker on the Community Center east lawn along Pacific Coast Highway at the southeast corner of the lawn (**Attachment 5**).

- Option 4: A by-way marker on the wall of the Community Center at the southeast corner (**Attachment 6**).
- Option 5: A by-way marker at ground level of the Community Center east lawn on the north corner of the lawn near the sidewalk between the lawn area and the Veterans Memorial (**Attachment 7**).

The installation of any marker would need to be placed in a location that is fully accessible under current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

As Pacific Coast Highway is under Caltrans jurisdiction, the following steps must be taken to allow a Highway Marker to be placed at any of the aforementioned proposed locations by Caltrans:

- First, the Garden Club must apply to the City Council to obtain a City Council resolution to express approval for the Highway Marker to be installed on PCH at one of the proposed locations.
- Next, once the City Council resolution is provided to Caltrans, the Garden Club must purchase and place the order for the Highway Marker.
- Finally, once the Highway Marker is purchased, the Public Works Department would need to provide Caltrans an engineering site layout plan and apply for, and obtain, an encroachment permit.

The aforementioned steps required by Caltrans would not be required for a by-way marker. The Garden Club would still be responsible for purchasing a by-way marker, but a City Council resolution or Caltrans involvement would not be necessary.

If approved, staff resources would be required in ensuring the project's completion. This would include the Community Resources Department and Public Works Department oversight with the following items:

- Creation of an agreement between the City of Hermosa Beach and Hermosa Garden Club including purchasing responsibilities, and installation and maintenance responsibilities.
- Execution of the following items should City Council approve a Highway Marker.
  - The Garden Club's application to the City Council to obtain a City Council resolution.
  - Design of an engineering site plan.
  - Completion of the application for the Encroachment Permit. The Caltrans Encroachment permit process can be lengthy and time consuming.
- Coordination with Public Works Operations and Maintenance staff to confirm placement of marker and any potential conflicts (e.g., irrigation lines, trashcan placement would need to be modified under the first option, etc.).
- Review by Public Works Engineering staff to ensure ADA compliance.

- Review and approval of a licensed contractor to complete marker installation and permit issuance by Public Works Engineering staff.
- Supervision of on-site construction of the marker installation by Public Works Inspector; and
- Planning of a dedication ceremony at the site after the marker is installed.

Staff requests City Council consider participation in the Blue Star Memorial Program and approval of one of the five location options presented.

**General Plan Consistency:**

This report and associated recommendation have been evaluated for their consistency with the City’s General Plan. Relevant Policies are listed below:

*Governance Element*

**Goal 1. A high degree of transparency and integrity in the decision-making process.**

Policy:

- **1.6 Long-term considerations.** Prioritize decisions that provide long-term community benefit and discourage decisions that provide short-term community benefit but reduce long-term opportunities.

**Goal 2. The community is active and engaged in decision-making processes.**

Policy:

- Responsive to community needs. Continue to be responsive to community inquiries, providing public information and recording feedback from community interactions.

**Fiscal Impact:**

The Garden Club would be responsible for purchasing either the by-way marker or the Highway Marker. Staff recommends the Garden Club also be responsible for securing a licensed contractor to install the marker, the cost of all labor and materials involved in installation, and any facilities modifications required to accommodate the marker.

After installation, staff recommends the Garden Club be responsible for the cost of regular maintenance, and if the marker is vandalized or accidentally damaged, the Garden Club be responsible for its restoration, replacement, or removal. Direct costs for staff to assist with supervising the installation and assisting with the dedication ceremony may be applicable.

**Attachments:**

1. Blue Star Memorial Program
2. Hermosa Beach Veterans Memorial Committee Letter
3. Option 1 Map

4. Option 2 Map
5. Option 3 Map
6. Option 4 Map
7. Option 5 Map

**Respectfully Submitted by:** Brian Sousa, Senior Recreation Supervisor

**Concur:** Lisa Nichols, Community Resources Department Director

**Concur:** Joseph SanClemente, Public Works Director

**Noted for Fiscal Impact:** Viki Copeland, Administrative Services Director

**Legal Review:** Patrick Donegan, City Attorney

**Approved:** Suja Lowenthal, City Manager