

American Legion Post 160 raises funds for new building

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By Ashley Hungerford

Marietta Daily Journal Staff Writer

SMYRNA - In 1946, the proceeds from an automobile raffle were used to purchase the property where the current American Legion Post 160 building now stands on Legion Drive.

According to history compiled by former Post Commander Robert Logan, World War II veterans worked to raise money to build the red, two-story building with proceeds from fish fries, barbecues and other raffles.

Now, almost 60 years after Smyrna's Post 160 moved into the building, its members are raising funds to build a new, larger building to meet the growing needs of the organization.

On July 4, the Smyrna American Legion Post 160 will hold a groundbreaking ceremony for its new building, which will be built across the parking lot from the current facility.

Charles Barrett, building committee and Post member, said they will have barbecue starting around 11 a.m. Wednesday, and the public is welcome to come. Around 2 p.m., they will hold a groundbreaking ceremony including a ceremonial groundbreaking. But Barrett promised the ceremony will be short and sweet "because it's going to be hot."

Post member Dennis Barlow, building committee member and project manager, said they will build a one-story building that will have an outdoor facade like many of the government buildings in Smyrna's Market Village.

"It's served our needs for 60 years, but it's old and worn out," Barlow said.

One thing many of the building committee members commented about the new building is its handicapped accessibility.

In the current building, the meeting rooms and banquet hall are upstairs, and many parts of the building are not easy for many of the handicapped and disabled veterans to navigate.

"The disabled veterans can't use the facilities here," Barlow said.

American Legion Post 160 Groundbreaking

When: Wednesday July 4th
Barbecue starts at 11 a.m.
Ceremony at 2 p.m.

Where: 160 Legion Drive, Smyrna
770-436-2501

Smyrna Mayor Pro Tem and Post member Wade Lnenicka said he agrees.

"We need handicapped facilities for our members," he said.

Even though the current building is not handicapped friendly, Lnenicka said it has stood the test of time. He said World War II veterans built the current building by hand.

"They built a great post, and it served its purpose," he said. "They were the greatest generation, and they built a building that brought us into the 21st century."

Lnenicka said quality has been a main focus with the new building. He said it will be durable and functional, taking the Post into the "22nd century."

Bulldozing on the new site is expected to start in August, and the building is expected to be completed in about six months. Barlow said the old building will be torn down as soon as they move into the new one. The two cannons that currently sit in front of the building will be moved to the new location.

Some of the funding for the new building is coming from the money the Post received when it sold much of its current property on Legion Drive to the city of Smyrna for the city to expand Brinkley Park.

Lnenicka said the city plans to add more baseball fields to the park and a passive walking trail. They will also work on the landscape of the park.

The American Legion Post 160 is also having a "Buy-A-Brick Campaign," selling engraved brick pavers to go around the flag poles in front of the new building.

Pete Thiel, building committee and Post member, said brochures to purchase a brick for veterans, friends, family or businesses are available at the current Post building, the Smyrna Community Center and at the Post's Web site www.americanlegionpost160.org.

The budget for the new facility is around \$1.5 million. Functionally wise, Barlow said the building will be about the same as the current facility. But Lnenicka said the new building will have a new alarm system with a key card security system.

Barlow said the American Legion, a veteran's organization, was founded in 1919 by World War I veterans. The Smyrna post was chartered in 1942, and the building was started in 1946.

"The American Legion wants to make sure the veterans are taking care of medically and their family supported," Barlow said.

Barrett said a major service the American Legion offers to veterans is they have a post service officer that helps veterans fill out paperwork and claim forms for things like the GI Bill, disability and burial assistance.

He said the Post also has a national service called "Support the Troops" for family members of military personnel on duty. He said the family members can call the national office who in then gets in contact with a local post to take care of duties like cutting the grass and fixing the roofs.

Post 160 also has a food bank, the first post to have one.

"We're very invested in our veterans and the future of our country," he said.

And many of the building committee members said the new building is going to be for the future American veterans.

"We're building this for our future members," Barrett said.

But all of them said they want to take part in experiencing the new building too.

ahungerford@mdjonline.com



Smyrna American Legion Post 160 members talk near the wooded area that will be the site of their new post home. From left are: Dennis Barlow, project manager of the new building; Hal Reeves, post adjutant; Charles Barrett, senior vice commander; Pete Thiel; Smyrna City Councilman Wade Lnenicka; and Jim Turner, building committee chairman.



Smyrna American Legion Post 160 member, Dennis Barlow, building project manager, talks Friday about the new post building which will be built directly behind him in the wooded area across the parking lot from the existing facility.



Smyrna American Legion Post 160 members, from left, Charles Barrett, Jim Turner and Smyrna City Councilman Wade Lnenicka stroll the site of their new home next door. Groundbreaking is Wednesday at 2 p.m.