

# **Vets hall general manager presents clarification of issues**

**By Frank Garza, General Manager, Jenny Lind Veterans Memorial District**

**Published in The Valley Springs News on June 23, 2017**

In response to numerous questions and some accusations I've had to deal with as a result of articles in recent editions of your publication, I hope you will allow me to clarify some information.

As to the greasy dilemma, the veterans' district was at no time seeking an exemption from having to install a grease interceptor. A grease interceptor is required of any establishment that will be serving food. Since we are not going to be cooking 200 meals a day, we are hoping to be allowed to install a smaller, less expensive one that meets state and county requirements, but the law does state that it is up to the utility district to determine what is best for them. We are working with VSPUD to resolve our issue.

As for the board's decisions upsetting a former board member, that is a very unfortunate thing and I am sorry Gail Belmont feels that way. I have the utmost respect for Gail as a veteran and as executive director of Quilts of Honor. Gail, her family and the whole Quilts of Honor Organization have my respect and admiration for what they do for my fellow veterans. I did not force Gail to resign because she didn't agree with me. She resigned because she wanted to.

I have nothing personal against the American Legion. I am a member of Post 102. I am not making a decision to hinder, hurt, or inconvenience the American Legion. I am one member of the board, I only have one vote when it comes to setting policy.

We, the Board of Directors, want to always be here for ALL Veterans and the community, not just Post 102 of the American Legion, and that is why we have taken the direction we have. The board is doing nothing wrong to Post 102. We are here not just for the Legion, but for ALL veterans, veterans' organizations and the community. We are not treating the Legion any different than we are treating anybody else. When the board voted on the new rate table for the hall, all five members of the board voted in favor. I've been a member of the board for 17 months. Not once has the executive board or any members of the Legion attended any of our board meetings to specifically discuss the rental rates for the hall, make a counter offer, or plead a hardship case. They just wanted it for free. No negotiations, no discussions, just free.

We did a comparison with other organizations in the local area and beyond and we believe we are asking for very reasonable rates from all potential renters. There are other districts that charge their local VFW and American Legion Post rent to use their memorial hall.

The old building was never an American Legion Hall, it's always been a Veterans Memorial Hall. The old memorial hall was built in the early sixties, the Legion's Post 102 was chartered 25 years ago. There was a time when the Board of Directors for the district and the executive officers for the post were one and the same. Therefore, the Legion was granted a lot of flexibility with what it could do in the hall. That's why when you walked into the old hall, it did look like a Legion hall. Nothing was put in writing, there were a lot of verbal agreements and granting of permission. Those times are gone. We want to ensure that going forward, everything is done properly in accordance with procedures and put in writing for records. That way, all future boards will know where they stand.

The Legion is using our gazebo area for free to hold their meetings until the new hall is open. Once it is open and they would have to pay, they opted to have their meetings at the Jenny Lind Odd Fellows Lodge, for free. I guess that's their way of helping the veterans' district support the veterans of this county.

We are trying to get this building finished as best as we can. Our predecessors had a dream of building a new hall. They didn't come up with a complete plan and cover all the incidentals. Things change, environmental and health codes, county planning codes, utilities. I could go on but the bottom line is we are going to finish this building.

I am sorry the library patrons were not aware of a driveway between the youth center and the school gym that people can use to get to the library. Everybody else uses it to get to the children's park, the gazebo and the ball fields. I am sure the library's patrons can also use it to get to the library.

When I was appointed as general manager of the veteran's district, I swore that I would do my best to keep the district a viable place that the veterans of our county, and its citizens can enjoy. As long as I am in that position, I will make my decisions based on what I feel is best for the district, our veterans and the community, not just one veteran or one veterans' organization. Our meetings are held the second Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. You are all welcome to attend and learn what we are doing for our veterans and our community.