

Proposed Worker Memorial snarled in bureaucratic red tape

SALEM — An effort by the Oregon AFL-CIO to establish a permanent memorial at the State Capitol to honor workers killed on the job has hit one bureaucratic roadblock after another.

The most recent is a \$28,000 “management service fee” the Department of Administrative Services wants before a “Fallen Worker Memorial” can be placed near the main entrance to the Labor and Industries Building on the Capitol Mall.

It has taken nearly three years for DAS to approve the design and site location of the memorial, which will serve as a remembrance for workers killed on the job and a reminder of the importance of safety in the workplace. It also would serve as a permanent location for the AFL-CIO to hold its Workers Memorial Day ceremonies. Nearly two decades ago the national AFL-CIO declared April 28 Workers Memorial Day in honor of workers killed on the job. And every year since, a memorial service has been held in either Salem or Portland.

Nationwide, there have been 133 worker memorial sites erected in 33 states since 1989. These memorials range from life-size bronze statues of miners to wall placards.

The design approved by DAS (see illustration above right) consists of a large boulder with an inscribed bronze plaque attached to it. The boulder would

rest within a landscaped sitting area in front of the L&I building.

“The management service fee would cost us more than the entire construction of the memorial,” said Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain.

The cost to construct the memorial is less than \$15,000, and the Oregon AFL-CIO already has raised roughly \$12,000, with more money committed once ground is broken.

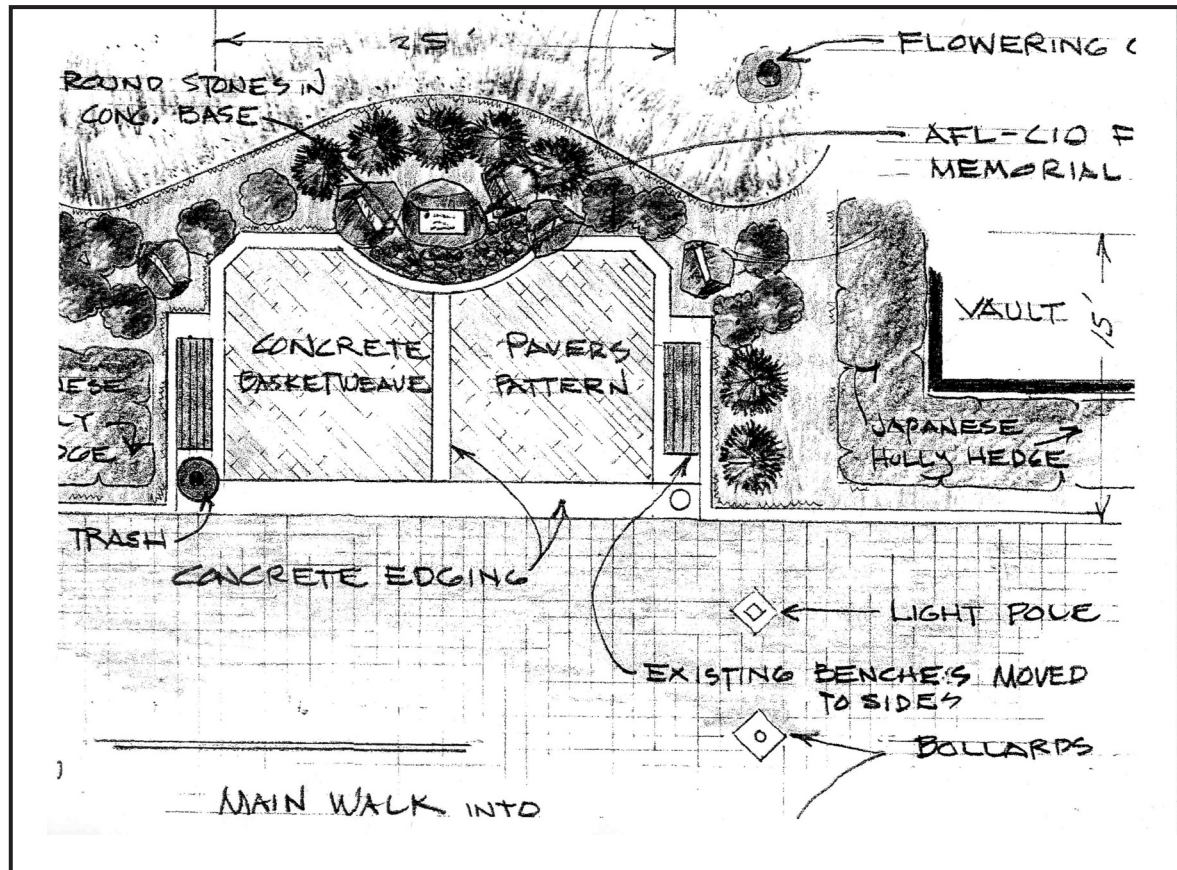
Chamberlain asked DAS to waive the management service fee, but it refused. In late January, Chamberlain sent a formal request to Gov. Ted Kulongoski asking that he waive the fee.

On April 7, the governor offered to split the cost of the service fee with the AFL-CIO 50/50.

According to DAS spokesman Lon Hokin, the governor likes the idea of a memorial honoring workers killed on the job. “The governor felt it appropriate that the state participate in the cost of the memorial,” Hokin told the NW Labor Press.

Hokin said management service fees, set at \$115 an hour, are billed to private entities using public property. The Fallen Worker Memorial was billed for an estimated 152 hours for completion and design work; 40 hours for bidding assistants; 48 hours for construction management supervision; and a lump sum mileage fee of \$500. The grand total: \$28,100.

Al Dorgan, who chairs the state la-



bor federation’s Safety, Health and Workers’ Compensation Committee, said the group is meeting April 18 (after this issue went to press) and will decide then whether or not to accept the reduced fee offer.

“If we do, we’re going to have to fast track collecting more contributions,” he said.

Dorgan, president of Albany Steelworkers Local 7150, and the committee took the lead to secure initial fund-

ing, develop design concepts and work with state officials to find a location. That work began in late 2005 after delegates to the Oregon AFL-CIO convention unanimously passed a resolution to build a memorial.

“It’s a pretty simple memorial on behalf of workers who died on the job,” said Dorgan, who sounded totally frustrated with the process. “There’s no electrical. All the plants around it are perennials and native to the area. We’ve had meeting after meeting after meeting, and here we are.”

To get to “here we are,” the AFL-CIO had to drastically scale back its initial concept, which included a four-pillar “circle of remembrance” situated on the west side of the State Capitol. In the center of the pillars was to be a bell that could ring as the names of workers killed on the job were read during Workers Memorial Day ceremonies.

“That’s a million-in-one project,” DAS told the Safety and Health Committee. Dorgan said the committee was preparing to take their concept to the Legislature for approval when DAS called and said it wanted to partner with the AFL-CIO to make it happen. The Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Administration became the sponsoring agency and DAS transferred management of the memorial to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

Dorgan said if the committee declines the governor’s offer, they likely will go to the Legislature in 2009 to seek funding to pay the \$28,000 fee. In the meantime, donations for the Fallen Workers Memorial still can be sent to:

Workers Memorial Fund
c/o Oregon AFL-CIO
2110 State Street,
Salem, OR 97301

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