

WARRENTON TEAM BEAUTIFIES ‘THE HEART OF THE CITY’

A military statue, new landscaping will enhance entrance to town

By MARILYN GILBAUGH
FOR COAST WEEKEND

Landscape designer Beth Holland has a vision for downtown Warrenton.

She sees a park-like setting where, at the town’s central four-way stop, each of the four corners complements the others. Her sketches feature well-placed trees, blossoming shrubbery and green grass.

Adjacent to the Post Office and the popular Dairy Maid, and across the street from Lighthouse Park, a long-awaited bronze statue saluting U.S. soldiers from World War I onward will anchor it all.

Meanwhile, benches and a few picnic tables will invite townspeople and visitors to meet and greet.

All of this smack dab in Warrenton’s city center. Sound good? It does to a group of civic-minded Warrenton locals.

The four-way stop is “the heart of the city,” Holland said.

“The intersection resonates, and people feel that it’s an important place,” she said. “This plan is cohesive, and, with the installation of the statue being a big catalyst, when you drive or walk by, you’ll have the sense of entering a room — not a flowery room but a memorial plaza,” she said.

With years of planning and planting experience, both in commercial and resi-

dential projects on the North Coast, Holland has left her mark on cities from Manzanita to Astoria. She has said that beautifying civic spaces leads to civic pride and a sense of well-being.

Warrenton City Manager Linda Engbretson agrees.

“The landscaping will tie Main Street in with our beautiful natural surrounds and enhance our downtown community,” Engbretson said.

“I’m really excited about this project,” which will be paid for with urban renewal dollars, she added.

Holland emphasized that this project is a team effort.

Engbretson, Community Development Director Skip Urling, along with Oregon Department of Transportation’s Mark Buffington, Warrenton resident Bert Little, Mayor Henry Balensifer, the city and planning commissioners, Pacific Power & Light and the Urban Renewal Agency have to work together. Egos are checked at the door.

‘Get it done’

Little, a Navy veteran, is quartermaster of VFW Fort Steven’s Auxiliary Post 10580.

With the support of the Auxiliary — and a promise to “get it done” to the previous quartermaster, Leroy Dunne — Little and his pals have finished, but not yet unveiled, the bronze military statue, a project in the works for more than two decades.

The full structure — a 7-foot-2-inch statue standing on a 6-foot pedestal — is a tribute to everyone who has served, or is serving, in the military, he said.



COLIN MURPHEY PHOTO

From left to right: Urban Renewal Advisory Board member Bob Bridgens, Community Development Director Skip Urling, VFW Quartermaster Bert Little, Mayor Henry Balensifer and landscape artist Beth Holland pose for a photo at Warrenton City Hall with bricks that will be part of a new armed forces memorial.

Little’s wife, Debbie, played no small role in getting the statue completed. She enrolled in a grant writing class at Clatsop Community College, and, in spring 2016, the Auxiliary received a \$72,020 grant from the state Parks and Recreation Department.

Mark Kenny, an artist who served in the Coast Guard eight years, was commissioned to create the statue.

“We wanted the monument placed so it could be seen as you come across the

bridge,” Little said.

The group is planning a community-wide unveiling celebration, Little said. Until then, however, the monument is back from the foundry and sitting under wraps.

“With our urban renewal program, we’ve made a lot of improvements over at the Warrenton Marina,” Urling said. “For this next phase, with Beth’s vision, we’re going to try to improve our city’s landscaping. It’s the bits and pieces it takes to make the whole.” 



Portland artist Mark Kenny stands next to the monument he created, which will eventually stand near the post office in Warrenton.

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