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TOP STORY

Fredericksburg agrees to cover cost of archaeological study for VFW

Taft Coghill

May 25, 2022

Disputes over a required archaeological study and property ownership have been settled between the Veterans of Foreign Wars and Fredericksburg government officials.

The Fredericksburg City Council voted unanimously Tuesday night to pass a resolution to contribute \$10,000 to the VFW Post 3103's project to renovate its building at 2701 Princess Anne St.

The VFW is working in partnership with the Silver Companies to overhaul the building, including the construction of a 4,000-square-foot facility adjacent to the existing building.

The city has an archaeological ordinance, and it is considered an important part of achieving council's 2035 vision for the city. But such a study can be costly.

VFW commander Todd Taylor requested that the study requirement be waived or that the \$8,000 fee be covered by the city.

There was initial hesitancy, as the staff at City Hall was concerned that waiving the archaeological study fee or requirement for the VFW would set a precedent that would've been difficult to sustain for other organizations.

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But a host of veterans in the Fredericksburg area showed up to the City Council meeting two weeks ago to show support for Taylor as he addressed council members.

Taylor and the veterans returned again on Tuesday as he expressed his displeasure with the contention of some officials that the VFW owns the property and not the city.

The city donated the lodge property to the VFW by a deed of gift in 2003, subject to the right to use the lodge as a polling place. The property will revert back to the city if the VFW ceases to exist or attempts to convey the property to a third party.

“Let’s be honest and clear about what the deed represents,” Taylor said. “The current restrictive deed of gift does nothing more than remove city responsibility for care and maintenance of the property while retaining overall control of the property. The deed does not leave the Veterans of Foreign Wars with any collateral with which to borrow against.”

After the May 10 meeting, City Council directed City Manager Tim Baroody and his staff to attempt to find a solution to offset the expense of the archaeological study. Baroody said he also spoke with the Silver Companies about the project.

Baroody said \$10,000 was identified as the right approach because it would cover the cost of the study and leave funds for other fees and permit requirements.

“We can move \$10,000 from this year’s FY22 contingency monies to the good purpose of supporting the VFW as they expand and improve that great offering in the city of Fredericksburg,” Baroody said.

Taylor noted that in addition to the use as a city polling place, meetings are also held at the VFW Post 3103 for Disabled American Veterans, the Marine Corps League and Alcoholics Anonymous. Veterans gather there to work out emotional issues attributed to post-traumatic stress disorder and homeschooled children use it for dramatic arts class, Taylor added.

“When we ask for something from the city, we often do so on behalf of the service organization that we work for,” Taylor said.

Taft Coghill Jr: 540/374-5526

tcoghill@freelancestar.com



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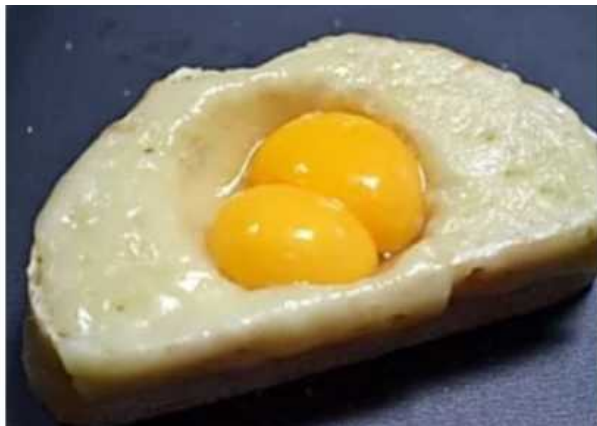
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By Taft Coghill

I've been covering Fredericksburg area communities since 2002, mainly as a sports reporter. I occasionally cover local government, as well.
