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Archives

This article ran on 200508

Consentino blocks vote on Vietnam Honor Roll

By Margo Sullivan
Staff writer

ATKINSON — Eleanor Zaremba went back to the selectmen last night for an answer about the Vietnam Honor Roll.

She did not get it.

Two weeks ago, the selectmen said they would take a vote last night and tell Zaremba if they would accept the honor roll with the names of Vietnam servicemen engraved.

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Zaremba sat last night with her head in her hands as selectmen Chairman Philip V. Consentino said he would not be part of any discussion or vote about the honor roll until he receives a written apology from Carol Grant.

Grant, of Crown Hill Road, has been the main organizer of the project. When the selectmen seemed to waver about allowing the honor roll to go in front of Town Hall, she wrote to the state attorney general to ask if the selectmen could legally ignore the Town Meeting vote and have the honor roll placed in a location other than one the voters approved.

Consentino read a statement that lambasted Grant for using a "variety of epithets" and for what he called her erratic behavior. He said her letter went beyond "decency" and also showed "reckless disregard for truth."

Grant wrote a letter of apology, walked up to Consentino and put it on the selectman's desk. But Consentino, who did not officially say he would not accept her apology, did not allow the honor roll vote to go forward.

Zaremba said the selectmen were losing sight of the point, which was to honor the veterans. She said they were dishonoring the veterans to continue the controversy.

"This is a whole other issue," she said.

Consentino interrupted her angrily.

"We want to honor the vets," he said. "We were all ready to do it. But why do we have to be taken over the coals."

Zaremba pointed out that Grant had just given her apology.

Consentino called a three-minute recess at that point.

Later, Grant said she was allowed to respond, but Consentino finally cut her off. Grant said she never slandered the Atkinson selectmen or even mentioned them by name. She said she asked the attorney general some hypothetical questions. She said the selectmen just were using her as an excuse not to accept the honor roll.

Selectman John Sapia said he would set up a meeting to forge a compromise about the honor roll. Some veterans, including David Weymouth of Summit Drive, have objected to putting the honor roll near the Vietnam Monument.

Zaremba said she was willing to talk but did not believe a compromise was likely.

Zaremba said the Honor Roll Committee is aiming for a ceremony in November, to coincide with Veterans Day. But she pointed out the selectmen have never officially indicated if they will allow the slabs to be installed in front of Town Hall by the Vietnam Monument.

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