

# Walkill joins the Hometown Heroes Banner Program



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**BY RICK REMSNYDER**

Walkill streets will have a patriotic look by Memorial Day if the local American Legion Post's "Walkill Area Hometown Heroes" banner program is a success.

Roger Rascoe, Commander of Rose-Sheeley American Legion Post No. 1034, presented the plan to honor past and present veterans to the Shawangunk Town Board at its April 15 meeting.

Rascoe said the red, white and blue 2-foot by 4-foot banners will be attached to utility poles along Walkill Avenue, the bridge over the Walkill River and along Route 208 in the Town of Shawangunk. The local American Legion Post hopes to install 35 banners that will recognize active duty and veteran service members, both living and deceased from the Walkill area.

Each banner will display a full-color photo of each veteran. Those serving on active duty in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, Reserves and the National Guard will be eligible for a banner. Living or deceased military veterans who were honorably discharged are also eligible.

Rascoe said the cost of purchasing and installing the banners would be \$5,000 and Post No. 1034 would be soliciting donations from local businesses and area civic organizations to help defray the cost.

“The American Legion Post has been active here for many, many years,” Rascoe said. “Our number of veterans is dwindling significantly. We just don’t want people to forget we’re still around and we do the good things that we try to do.”

A similar banner program has been well-received along the waterfront in the city of Kingston. Supervisor John Valk said the village of Walden has similar banners to honor its veterans.

Valk said the town owns the utility poles on the bridge over the Walkill River and those on town roads and installation shouldn’t be a problem.

“I’ve seen other communities do it and it’s nice to do it because some of these veterans are gone and seem to be forgotten,” Valk said. “When they’re done, people will see them and remember what they sacrificed for our country.”

Rascoe provided the board with a copy of a sample banner for deceased veteran Joe Egan, who retired after serving in World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

Valk said many veterans like Egan become valuable members of the community after they retire from military service and it’s entirely appropriate to honor them with banners in the town.

Anyone interested in obtaining an application for a banner for a veteran family member or a friend can do so by mail. The application request along with a high-quality photo of the veteran should be sent to: Rose-Sheeley American Legion Post No. 1034, P.O. Box 719, Wallkill, N.Y. 12589.

“I’m optimistic that as folks in the community become aware of the Hometown Hero Banner Program it will prove to be a good recruitment tool in growing membership in the American Legion,” Rascoe said.

Rascoe also reported that the Post’s membership is planning to host the annual Memorial Day Parade and Memorial Service following a year’s absence due to the pandemic.

“We’re going to be working with the police department and the (Ulster County) Department of Health to make sure that we do it the right way given the Covid-19 restrictions,” Rascoe said. “We’re in the planning stages to make the event safe for participants.”

Town Police Chief Gerald Marlatt said the Police Benevolent Association will put on a “National Night Out” on Aug. 3 at Garrison Park.

“You’ll have members of your community coming to meet your police department and interact with your officers,” Marlatt said. “You get to know everybody. Not only the police officers but all emergency services.”

Marlatt also got authorization from the town board to purchase a new police car.

“We currently have eight vehicles, three of which have over 120,000 miles,” Marlatt said. “We try and rotate them throughout the shifts.”

The new vehicle will be a Ford Explorer. He estimated the cost to be about \$50,000.

Town Highway Superintendent Joseph LoCicero reported that the town’s 100 miles of streets will be swept at least once and maybe twice this year. The sweeping will begin in early May.