

# **LAURA JANE MUSSER FOUNDATION**

## **proposal questions**

### **“NEVER FORGET PARK” in Saratoga, Wyoming**

- **ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND**

The Town of Saratoga (pop. 1700) is creating a new landscaped park: "Never Forget Park" (NFP). The park project began in 2008 after a local young man, Army SSgt. Tyler Pickett, was killed in action in Iraq and will be a tribute to all those who have sacrificed their precious lives for the sake of others. The community has been raising funds for over a decade. Unfortunately, the park has been delayed until now due to a lack of strong direction from the Town of Saratoga.

The Town of Saratoga's new, dedicated and focused park committee began its work in May 2021 and is comprised of private citizens, veterans and newly elected councilmen. This committee has developed the park design, created a website, worked with the family of Tyler Pickett, commissioned a memorial sculpture, and hired an engineering firm to create documents.

The community has been very clear: this park must be completed, out of respect for Tyler Pickett and his family. They have been very frustrated with the long process and delays. With the help of The Laura Jane Musser Foundation funding, completing "Never Forget Park" will be a respite and reflects the determination of Saratoga residents.

One committee member is a professional grant writer and former CEO of the local chamber of commerce. Another committee member is the director of the local conservation district. Both have many years of experience developing plans of action, fund raising, and successful completion of large projects. The new Mayor of Saratoga has served before and has pledged the park will be completed this year.

- **OPEN SPACE OVERVIEW**

This 2.5 acre project is based in Saratoga, Wyoming, in southeastern Wyoming. Currently, the space for "Never Forget Park" is a patch of gravel and weeds and is used for overflow parking to the adjacent "Veterans Island Park." The North Platte River flows around the island. "Veterans Island Park" is the location of numerous events such as family reunions, music festivals, and community picnics. It features a playground, walking path with connection to the free mineral hot springs, barbeque picnic shelter and a skate park.

"Never Forget Park" will extend the public space and add much-needed parking spaces for cars and RV's. Its location along a busy street (Pic Pike Road) leads to premier lodging facilities and to Saratoga Lake and will be a source of pride for residents and visitors alike.

- **OPEN SPACE CHARACTERISTICS**

“Never Forget Park” will include a memorial sculpture, ADA compliant benches, handicapped accessible restrooms and parking. Lush plantings of native species will provide shade to the open space. Light posts installed along the sidewalk will aid those using the park after dark. Flags and poles for each of the five branches of the armed forces will be installed and lit from dusk to dawn. Several gabion basket benches will be installed and will have veteran’s memorial plates attached. An open-air pavilion will be built for community events such as concerts and patriotic presentations.

The property abuts a 43’ wide strip of land on the east which is owned by the neighboring resort. Negotiations for purchase of this land have not been successful so the design plan reflects this constraint. It is hoped that once the park is complete, the owners of the resort will see the benefits to their property and will be more receptive to negotiations.

- **RESPONSIBLE PUBLIC ENTITY**

The property is owned by the Town of Saratoga and self-contained within the property boundaries. Mowing, weed and pest control, and tree/shrub care will be part of the Town’s maintenance contract along with the other town parks. The Mayor and council have agreed to this arrangement.

- **PUBLIC ACCESS**

The park’s simple design includes ADA compliant sidewalks and parking spaces. In addition to single car parking, there will be several RV or boat/trailer parking spaces. The park is open and free to use by the general public at all times. The restrooms will be tied into the town sewer system and will also be ADA compliant. Decorative street lamps along the sidewalk and near the restrooms will assure the park can be utilized after dark and in the pre-dawn hours. The lighting will increase the sense of security of the area as well. The park is about three blocks from downtown Saratoga (with many shops, restaurants and pubs) and is an easy walk by residents and tourists.

- **GOALS**

The committee has identified eight goals/deliverables in the completion of “Never Forget Park”:

Goal 1: The Town of Saratoga will hire engineer to prepare bid documents for sidewalks, wheelchair ramps, curb and gutter, pavement surface and striping

Quantity: one project manual including bid documents, agreement and technical specifications

Benefit: well-qualified and experienced construction management ensure professionally executed project

Goal 2: The Town of Saratoga will install new decorative light posts along sidewalks

Quantity: 12 posts

Benefit: safe use of park after dark

Goal 3: The Town of Saratoga will purchase materials to make gabion basket benches with composite decking seats

Quantity: 20 benches

Benefit: ADA compliant benches for rest and reflection, rocks provided by the town as in-kind

Goal 4: The Town of Saratoga will organize volunteers to assemble benches and install them in the park

Quantity: 50 volunteers

Benefit: community engagement and in-kind donation decreases cash expenses

Goal 5: The Town of Saratoga will organize volunteers to compile list of veterans from Saratoga and install memorial plaques

Quantity: 12 volunteers

Benefit: List does not currently exist and honoring their sacrifices is vital

Goal 6: The Town of Saratoga will install signage in the park listing project sponsors and funding agencies

Quantity: 3 signs

Benefit: Recognition shows wide support of the project

Goal 7: The Town of Saratoga will plant trees and shrubs in the park, with help from school children and volunteers

Quantity: 150 children, 5 volunteers

Benefit: Educational experience demonstrates conservation principals such as water usage and care of native plantings

Goal 8: The Town of Saratoga will open the park to the public with a ribbon cutting ceremony by late summer 2023

Quantity: 1 event with 250 attendees

Benefit: Celebration of this success propels community to accomplish other projects. Attendees of all ages and sectors of the community brings everyone together for a collective purpose

- **ACTIVITIES & TIMELINE**

**PHASE 1 May 2021--June 2023**

During Phase 1 of the project, the committee has relied on in-kind donations for setting up a website capable of taking donations, landscape design and artistic rendering of the park, and writing grants. A local arts council commissioned a sculpture which commemorates the

sacrifices of Tyler Pickett and other servicemen. The Town has hired a local engineering firm to create construction documents. A contractor will be hired to install sidewalks, curb and gutter and parking lot surface. Cash expenses have been paid with the donations collected over the past several years. All donations are held with the Town of Saratoga in a designated fund. It is expected that curb and gutter and sidewalks will consume much of the funds already raised for the project and completed in this phase.

## **PHASE 2 July 2023**

In the second phase of the project, the open grassy area will be hydroseeded by a local company, possibly at cost. The plantings will be supplied by the local conservation district and planted by volunteers and children from the school as an educational experience. The committee expects that donations will increase significantly since a few verbal financial commitments have been made with the condition of seeing progress in the project.

## **PHASE 3 August--September 2023**

Phase 3 will involve making gabion baskets for benches. The benches will be made by filling wire baskets with river rock and then adding a seat made of composite decking material. All the labor will be provided by volunteers and most of the materials will be donated.

## **PHASE 4 October--November 2023**

Since the restrooms and amphitheater are large and expensive elements in the park design, their completion will be in the last phase. In addition to this grant application, other grants will be submitted to help fill the unmet financial need.

- **UTILIZATION OF GRANT**

The total project cost is estimated at \$745,000. To date, about \$275,000 has been raised. Several grant requests have been submitted and several more organizations have been identified as potential sources of funding.

The Laura Jane Musser Foundation's "Environmental" funding priority could help with the Phase 2 expenses for the trees and shrubs will be planted. The local conservation district has pledged seedlings, however, if enough funds are raised, mature trees will be placed for instant shade and structure. Instead of seeding wildflowers, funds may be used to plant gallon-sized perennial native flowers. To better utilize the space for public gatherings, the Musser Foundation funds could also be used to build the amphitheater. This structure will be an open-air design and use local supplies such as pine logs and river rock. It will also feature raw steel to match the nearby foot bridges.

- **PROMOTING USE OF OPEN SPACE**

"Never Forget Park" is adjacent to "Veterans Island Park" which is an established public park and a well-known location for large reunions, community events and family picnics. The completion of NFP will increase the use of both parks since the area will be more attractive.

The memorial sculpture is a tribute to all servicemen who sacrifice their lives for the freedoms of others. The nameplates on the benches will honor individual veterans. It is expected that Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and Flag Day celebrations and presentations will take place in the park.

“Veterans Island Park” features a playground and skate park as well as a walking path that connects to the Hobo Hot Springs via two foot bridges. “Never Forget Park” will be an extension of these popular public areas and encourage more exercise and family time. NFP will provide paved parking and public restrooms which are missing at “Veterans Island”.

- **PROTECTION OF SUSTAINABLE ECOSYSTEMS**

The committee envisions “Never Forget Park” will provide public access to the North Platte River for launching boats, fishing, and wildlife viewing. Since the river stays open year-round, one can find ducks, mule deer and even moose in the vicinity any day of the year. The wildflowers will attract bees and butterflies. The completion of this project will revitalize the gravel and weed-filled space into a beautiful naturally landscaped park.

- **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Local news media have kept the general public apprised of the project’s progress. Recruitment of volunteer committee members is an open and public process and anyone is invited to become involved. The American Legion Post #54 and its members, Platte Valley Arts Council, Platte Valley Legacy Foundation, Freemason Lodge #14, and Order of the Eastern Star #12 are all engaged in the project. In addition, dozens of individuals and businesses have donated money to the project. The American Legion has spearheaded fundraising activities, the Platte Valley Arts Council commissioned a sculpture, and Order of the Eastern Star made a large cash donation.

- **STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT**

The American Legion Post 54 has written a heartfelt letter of support for this grant application. The members have generously donated to the cause and help several small fundraising events and activities.

Through a large public art project, the Platte Valley Arts Council commissioned a local artist to create a sculpture in memory of SSgt. Tyler Pickett. It will be installed in a prominent location in the NFP.

- **PROJECT LEADERS**

The “Never Forget Park” committee consists of Mayor Chuck Davis, Councilman Mike Cooley, Stacy Crimmins and Joseph Parsons.

Crimmins was the Saratoga/Platte Valley Chamber of Commerce CEO for seventeen years before retiring to start a grant-writing business. She served on the Wyoming State Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors as President, planned several signature events that draw thousands of participants each year, and has a BS degree in Interior Design with an emphasis on Landscape Architecture. Crimmins is donating her time to write and manage all grants for this project.

Parsons has been the District Manager for the Saratoga-Encampment-Rawlins Conservation District (SERDC) for a decade and has won several state awards of excellence including the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts Outstanding Employee and the U.S. Forest Service Rise to the Future Award. The SERDCD works closely with the Forest Service, Wyoming Game and Fish, Bureau of Land Management, and private landowners and has worked on several water conservation and tree conservation projects that have received state-wide recognition. Joe served two tours in Operation Iraqi Freedom in the Marine Corp and rose to the rank of Sergeant and is the Vice Commander of the American Legion Post #54. Parsons is donating his time and talents on this committee.

Elected Mayor Chuck Davis was sworn into office on January 3, 2023 for a 4 year term. He has spent 15.5 years in law enforcement for the State of Wyoming and 13 of those 15 years in narcotics investigation. Mayor Davis also worked 34 years in heavy civil construction mainly involved in road construction, water & sewer installation and excavation. He enjoys spending time with family and his 6 grandkids and is an avid outdoorsman. He has a membership with the Saratoga Gun Club and has participated with the Encampment Little League Program.

Councilman Mike Cooley moved to Saratoga, Wyoming in 1974 and worked as a logger and has been in the oil field until 1989. He then spent the next 30 years with Arch Coal and retired in 2019. He is an avid outdoorsman and loves spending time with his 4 grandkids

Former Director of Public Works, Jon Winters, was instrumental in working with the engineers in the design phase of the project. Winters has since retired but continues to be involved.

- **SUSTAINABILITY**

In addition to “Never Forget Park”, the Town of Saratoga owns and maintains four other parks. The contract for town park maintenance is a bid process with the funds coming out of the general budget. Maintenance includes mowing, weed and pest control, and pruning shrubs and trees as needed. NFP is about half the size of two other parks, so the budgetary impact to the town is minimal. The Town of Saratoga also bids out the cleaning of their public restrooms. In addition to NFP, there are only three other facilities. Again, the cost of maintenance will be negligible in comparison of their other obligations.

By planting native species of trees, shrubs and wildflowers, the need for maintenance will be reduced. The trees and shrubs will be drought and pest resistant and will also withstand the high altitude of the area. Wildflowers will reseed themselves and need no maintenance at all after planting. An irrigation system will be installed so that watering during the summer will be automatic and regulate water consumption. Part of the park will be seeded with grass and the remainder is paved parking. With proper grading, rain run-off will drain into the North Platte River and the gutters will drain directly into the town sewer system.

Species include: Mountain Ash, Hackberry, Russian Hawthorne, Colorado Blue Spruce, Rocky Mountain Maple, Flowering Crab, Barberry, Mugo Pine, Blue Mist Spirea, Purple Sage, Fountain Grass, Yarrow, Blanketflower, Black-eyed Susan, Flax, Oriental Poppies.

- **REPLICABILITY**

Because each community differs in altitude, average rain fall, and climate, the NFP project may not be replicable in areas that vary greatly in these aspects. However, the purpose of the park is certainly replicable. The United States of America enjoys many freedoms due to the sacrifices of hundreds of thousands of servicemen who gave their lives fighting for each of us. Memorial parks are a modest way to recognize this sacrifice, and this recognition is a source of pride for residents. Survivors of heroes who have died will be grateful for the acknowledgement of their loss. The town and the NFP are eager to share their progress and success after the completion of “Never Forget Park” by utilizing local media and social media.

- **PREVIOUS GRANT UPDATE**

n/a

- **DIVERSITY COMPONENT**

According to the US Census, 98% of Saratoga residents are US citizens. Ninety-two percent are white (non-Hispanic). Much of the focus of “Never Forget Park” will be the veterans who call Saratoga home. Of the 185 veterans who live in Saratoga, 99 of them are over seventy-five years of age. Seventy-seven (or 70%) of Saratoga’s veterans served in Vietnam, which is two times greater than any other conflict and greater than the US’s 43%. Thirty-three vets served in the Gulf Wars, just as SSgt. Tyler Pickett had.

- **ANTI-DISCRIMINATION**

The Town of Saratoga follows all federal and state laws regarding employees and terms of employment.

## **LETTERS OF SUPPORT**



NFP LOS american  
legion.pdf

Order of Eastern Star Letter of Support

## MAP AND PLANS



NFP plan 4c.pdf



NFP WLC site plan  
revision G, 7.28.22(1



maps.pdf

## BUDGETS

- **PROJECT BUDGET** please include expense and revenue detail, also include revenue sources, amounts, and what is secured and what is pending.



NFP project budget  
UM.pdf

- **ORGANIZATIONAL BUDGETS** (or if a public entity, departmental budgets) – for the previous year and for the current year. For the previous year, please submit your actual budget expenses and revenue detail. For the current year, please submit a year-to-date budget that includes expense and revenue detail revenue sources, and what is secured and what is pending.
- **BALANCE SHEET OR 990** Please upload your organization's balance sheet from the most recent complete year. If your organization does not create a balance sheet, please upload your organization's most recent 990 tax form.

## ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

If your organization has a written anti-discrimination policy, please provide it.

### IRS Status

or

### Local Unit of Government Letter

Please include a copy of your 501(c)(3) letter from the IRS. If you are a unit of local government, please provide a detailed letter of endorsement for the project on agency letterhead, signed by a head officer of your unit of government. Please ensure that the letter indicates awareness of and support of the proposed activities and is addressed to the Laura Jane Musser Fund.

Town of Saratoga LoS