



## **CITY OF CORONADO**

### **CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT**

#### **League of Wives Memorial Bench and Plaque**

##### **RECOMMENDATION**

Provide direction on the preferred plaque text and bench location and authorize staff to proceed with installation.

##### **BACKGROUND**

At the April 1, 2025, City Council meeting, Councilmembers Purvis and Steward submitted a Policy #2 request to consider the installation of a commemorative plaque on a bench in Star Park adjacent to the League of Wives Memorial statue, which was installed in 2024. The City Council approved the request and directed staff to develop and return with options.

The League of Wives Memorial statue, the first of its kind nationally, honors military spouses of Prisoners of War (POW) and Missing in Action (MIA) service members. The movement's leader and founder, Sybil Stockdale, was a Coronado resident, and many of the women involved in the League of Wives, and later the National League of Families, have ties to Coronado. A separate plaque would provide additional recognition to the Coronado women and families directly connected to this history.

##### **ANALYSIS**

A commemorative bench in Star Park, adjacent to the existing statue, provides the most appropriate opportunity to recognize Coronado women and families connected to the League of Wives. A bench allows for a permanent and accessible tribute while preserving the integrity of the memorial statue already in place at the park. Staff has compiled options for both the plaque wording and the bench location for Council's consideration.

As discussed at the April 1 meeting, the wording on the plaque is significant and somewhat subjective. While the statue recognizes the broader national movement, the plaque provides an opportunity to honor the local women involved. Staff, in coordination with the Coronado Historical Association, identified the Coronado women connected to the League of Wives and the later National League of Families of American Prisoners in Southeast Asia.

Identified wives include:

- Marjorie Jenkins
- Sherry Martin
- Mary Ann "Pat" Mearns
- Chloe Moore
- Shirley Stark
- Sybil Stockdale
- Donna Rea Thompson

The League of Wives movement eventually transformed to the League of Families, expanding from wives of POW/MIA service members to include other family members such as mothers, sisters, and daughters. Council will need to determine whether the plaque should mirror the original identity of the movement

(League of Wives) or reflect its broader successor (League of Families).

The Coronado Historical Association also identified two additional women who could be included under the League of Families scope:

- Anita Woods: Mother to former POW Captain Brian Woods. Mrs. Woods and her husband were long-time Coronado residents. Her son is credited as being the first POW to touch American soil after release.
- Barbara Walker: Daughter of Anita Woods and sister of Captain Brian Woods.

### **Plaque Wording**

Staff has reviewed potential plaque language and identified two draft options for Council consideration (Attachment 1):

- **Option 1: Honor League of Wives**  
Recognizes the Coronado women who were spouses of POW/MIA service members.  
Proposed text: "Honoring Coronado's League of Wives" followed by the seven names listed above.
- **Option 2: Honor League of Families**  
Recognizes the broader set of Coronado women, including wives, mothers, and sisters of POW/MIA service members.  
Proposed text: "Honoring Coronado's League of Families" followed by nine names, including Anita Woods and Barbara Walker.

### **Bench Location**

Staff has reviewed potential installation sites within Star Park and identified two options for Council consideration (Attachment 2):

- **Proposed Site 1: New Bench**  
This option proposes installing an additional bench in Star Park, adjacent to Flora Avenue. This is the most straightforward option, as it does not require the removal or modification of existing benches.
- **Proposed Site 2: Replace and Relocate Existing Benches (*Recommended*)**  
This option would situate the commemorative bench closer to the League of Wives Memorial statue but would require modification of existing benches. In this location, one existing bench would need to be removed, and another bench relocated.

This approach adds complexity and cost, but it places the plaque in closer proximity to the statue itself, creating a stronger visual connection between the two memorial elements. In addition, this option would replace the bench adjacent to Loma Avenue, closest to the beach, which currently does not match the other benches. As a result, selecting this option provides an opportunity to update and standardize all benches in the park for greater consistency. With this option, both the commemorative plaque on the bench to be relocated and the plaque installed on the base of the cement foundation for the relocated bench would be preserved, resulting in no loss of existing commemorative plaques in the park.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Total project costs will vary depending on the bench site selected. The plaque cost is \$775, including shipping. The estimated cost for installation at Proposed Site 1 is approximately \$19,000, pending final construction details. The estimated cost for installation at Proposed Site 2 is \$24,609, with an additional \$6,723 if slab replacement and turf restoration are required.

The project will be paid out of the Public Services Facilities Budget 10030005-80030.

**ALTERNATIVE**

The Council may suggest alternative wording for the plaque or bench site or direct staff to return with other alternatives.

**CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT**

This action is not subject to CEQA.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

No public notice is required for this item, but the women and families suggested for honoring have been notified of this item. Additionally, the League of Wives Foundation has been notified.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Draft Plaque Text Options
2. Star Park Bench Location Options

Submitted By: City Manager's Office / Kelli Maples