



September 11, 2024

Honorable Mayor and Governing Body,

The Veteran's Advisory Board was initially inclined to support the City Council Resolution to relocate the Soldier's Monument from the plaza to the Santa Fe National Cemetery. The unknown question at the time, however, was whether or not the cemetery and, more explicitly, the Office of Memorial Affairs at the VA, would approve a relocation application from the city. The city leadership had reached out to the cemetery director but had not discussed its resolution with the Office of Memorial Affairs.

In doing research into this issue, we found a memorandum dated January 3, 2009 from the Under Secretary of Memorial Affairs titled *Guidelines and Requirements for Review and Acceptance of Memorials in National Cemeteries*. This document establishes policies and procedures for organizations wishing to establish memorials on national cemeteries.

In three places in the document there are clear restrictions on the memorials that would be approved. The language in each is essentially identical. In paragraphs 3.1.6 (Commemorative Works), 3.3.6 (Inscriptions), and 4.1.6 (Standardized Memorial Monuments) the guidelines note that applications for memorials that "could be considered offensive" will not be approved. Given the history of controversy and vandalism surrounding the Soldier's Monument, we are highly skeptical the VA's Office of Memorial Affairs would look favorably on a request from the City of Santa Fe to relocate the monument to the National Cemetery.

The Veteran's Advisory Board therefore recommends the city retain the monument on the plaza, its historic resting place, and undertake the following measures:

- Restore the obelisk on top of the monument's base
- Contract for the construction of a neutrally-worded plaque to cover the controversial inscription on the north-facing plinth
- Update the interpretive brass plaque on the concrete stand at the south side of the monument to add an explanation as to why a new plaque was installed on the north-facing plinth
- Install security cameras to monitor the monument 24/7 as a deterrent to any further vandalism

The Board recognizes that any solution as to the location of the monument will meet with opposition from some. Given the long history of the monument on the plaza, we believe that keeping it in its present location with the added measures addressed above is a solution likely to be the least offensive to citizens and veterans in Santa Fe.

***Voted on 09/10/2024**

APPROVED Unanimously by the Members of the Veterans Advisory Board of the City of Santa Fe

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Williams, Chairperson