



*From the Mayor's Desk*

**June 2019**

## **Creating a Monument to Honor Our Veterans**

On Saturday morning we will dedicate the city's veterans' monument and unveil the sculptures that represent each of the branches of our Armed Forces. The monument, which is located on the Town Green at the new Town Center, also tells the stories of the countless citizens and community members who heeded the call to serve.

The idea for a monument to recognize the men and women who have served or are serving our country began with a conversation with one of our councilmembers, Alex Wright. Like me, Alex served in the U.S. Navy. He called me to relay a story about a WWII veteran he had met at our YMCA just days before. After serving in WWII the veteran, now well into his 90s, went on to serve in the Korean War and in between wars swam for his country on the Olympics team in 1948.

That meeting with the WWII vet brought up an important question. When this veteran passes away, his story will die with him. Alex asked, "How do we capture his story?" And with that question, we began to think about constructing a veterans' monument to honor our veterans.

Like any big initiative, there are some pretty big problems. We didn't have any money, and we didn't have any land but we did have the technology to create a living monument. But how to begin such a large project – and more importantly – who could we ask to take on this monumental task?

As Alex jokingly said during the flag-raising at the grand opening of the Town Center in April, "Who can we bamboozle into taking on this project?" Both of us agreed -- it had to be an Army man! Who else would be able to take on this gargantuan not realizing how hard it would be, yet get the job done. I knew just the right guy. We called Bob Ballagh, a retired U.S. Army colonel and long-time Peachtree Corners resident, who agreed to take the job.

It would require organization, countless meetings, fundraisers, discovering ways to connect with veterans and a lot of outreach efforts to make it all happen. Under Bob's direction, the Peachtree Corners Veterans Monument Association was formed. In the spring of 2015, he gathered like-minded men and women to serve as a board of directors and enlisted about two dozen volunteers to help get the project off the ground. After numerous discussions, it was

decided the most fitting location for the monument would be to place it prominently on the Town Green at the Town Center.

The monument is situated in a serene setting, it features a 2,500 square-foot plaza with a central pillar with an eagle atop the globe which represents the presence of the U.S. Armed Forces around the world, five sculptures to represent each of the branches, and one sculpture to honor the veterans of the National Guard, Federal Reserves and Merchant Marines.

The bronze sculptures have been created by renowned artist Chad Fisher who graciously donated the sculptures. The monument includes an interactive component to identify and recognize the service of the veterans of our city, which is the “living monument” piece I mentioned earlier. We added this feature so that their stories will live on.

The monument also features engraved stone benches and the plaza is lined with customized brick pavers honoring loved ones.

It is our wish that this monument will help all our citizens, especially our children, know the stories of those who have served.

The program includes music by the 116<sup>th</sup> Army Band Georgia Army National Guard, keynote address and the unveiling of the sculptures. We hope to see you at 10 a.m. for the formal unveiling and dedication of the city’s veterans’ monument.

***Mike Mason***  
***Mayor***