

**From:** Gwen Woirhaye  
**To:** [WebMail - CCD](#)  
**Subject:** Park issue  
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Mayor Vinatieri, Council members and City Manager Saeki,

I regret that I am away this week and cannot speak to you and the people of Whittier in person. I do not fault you for not knowing about the history of the Society of Friends (Quakers), but I do fault you for not finding out and not paying attention to what we are telling you.

You supposedly “canvassed” the neighborhood of Central Park (when was it changed from Friends Park?) but this did not mean going door to door or sending a letter to residents. It meant a table in the park for one week during November, 2020, when we were all being urged to stay at home to keep Covid from spreading. It is disingenuous to claim that this made the procedures public. Were you even informed of Lind Coop’s vehement objections to putting war images in a park gifted to the people of Whittier by the Friends who founded the City? He states that the young people staffing the table seemed dumbfounded at what he told them which included his objections on the basis of Friends Peace Testimony.

The council decision to place the memorial at the Civic Center was by unanimous consensus in April of 2019 and that directive was given to the staff. Under pressure from two councilmen, the former Director of Parks took it back to the Art in Public Places Committee in September of 2019 and said the council now wants it in Central Park. That was not the truth. We have the minutes of both meetings to support the Civic Center location, which is the most appropriate place for such a monument.

The change to Central Park appears to have been accomplished outside of regular procedures when a staff member told a committee that City Council “wanted it in Central Park.” This is such a monumental insult to our Quaker founders and their faith descendants of today (First Friends Church, one-half block south of the park) that it is difficult to find words to describe it.

The Society of Friends was established in 1642 after a mystical experience by our founder George Fox in England. From the beginning Friends were opposed to using war to solve problems and Fox himself served jail time rather than bear arms. We have continued to oppose war ever since as a cursory search online would show. To put images of war in our park is unthinkable!

Besides the objection of the Society of Friends, the park is small and little children play there all the time. The statue of Quaker Poet John Greenleaf Whittier, for whom our city was named, demonstrates to children a peaceful nature. Please imagine for a moment walking in the park with your toddler children or grandchildren and coming face-to-face with the horrific images of killing. What will you say? Let me be clear: we are not objecting to the art itself, just to the inappropriate placement. Nor are we objecting to the creation of a memorial to a local hero. Such images belong in government space, not recreation space.

After numerous records requests, the City is unable to produce the deed of ownership which would clarify any restrictions placed on its use.

Friends tradition says that Ervin Stanley found it in the city archives when there was a threat of turning it into a parking lot and that it gave the land to the PEOPLE of Whittier to be maintained by the CITY and if the city failed to do this in a proper manner that it would revert to Pickering Land and Water Company or its successor (Domestic Water). We cannot find a copy of the deed but I did find in the Whittier Monthly Meeting Minutes that in 1954 Council thought to place a Marine Armory in the park. After objections from the Friends, it was relocated to York Field. At least the Council 70 years ago was responsive to Friends concerns.

Please, please, I beg you, reconsider and avoid making a horrible mistake that will be a permanent reminder of the contempt shown by this Council for our Founders.

Gwen Woirhaye, 5810 Friends Ave., Whittier