

Dixon Fire Department set to welcome steel from World Trade Center site

By Kimberly K. Fu/ KFu@TheReporter.com

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It may have happened almost 10 years ago, but it still feels like yesterday when terrorists attacked America, killing thousands and toppling an iconic image of patriotism.

"The incident of Sept. 11, 2001, not only affected the nation but for me, it was a personal tragedy," Ben Edokpayi told Dixon City Council members Tuesday night. "I lost my cousin in the Twin Towers. ... My life has changed ever since."

The former Reporter copy editor and onetime Dixon Tribune editor spoke out in support of helping the local Fire Department create a Sept. 11 memorial from a piece of steel taken from the fallen World Trade Center.

"It's something that will stay with me for the rest of my life," he explained. "(My cousin) is buried in New York in Forest Lawn, but having this piece of steel close to us here will mean a lot for me, help me in my healing process."

The City Council seemed to agree with Edokpayi, voting 4-0 to authorize City Manager Nancy Huston to execute an agreement with the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey in transferring the steel to the Fire Department.

Councilman Rick Fuller was not in attendance.

In 2009, fire officials learned of an opportunity to obtain a piece of the World Trade Center. The request was made and plans begun.

In February, officials were notified that, following completion of a transfer agreement, the steel would be released into the department's care. The agreement calls for the Fire Department to be responsible for all costs of the steel's removal and transportation to Dixon.

Fire Chief Aaron McAlister said that the steel beam -- measuring 29 inches long, 8 inches wide and 3 inches high -- would be featured in a monument likely fronting the Ford Way fire station, where it would be easily accessible to the public.

In other matters, the City Council voted 3-1, with Mayor Jack Batchelor dissenting, to approve an ordinance for a two-year pilot program regulating the possession, sale and use of fireworks within the city.

Batchelor had been out of town when the program was OK'd by other council members, and lodged his dismay Tuesday for the record.

"I'm just kind of blown away that we have to have so many fireworks stands here in the city of Dixon," he said of the eight approved by the council. "Even the people who sell the stuff recommended a lower amount. We talk about not wanting to impede entrepreneurship. When you flood the market, that certainly impedes entrepreneurship, in my opinion.

"But it is what it is. My vote is not gonna sway that. I just think eight is absolutely absurd."

The matter will return to the board in two years, after data has been collected, to determine the longevity of the program.