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## **Permanent Memorial Panel Tackles Time And Opinions**

By Nancy K. Crevier  
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**“We are taking this one meeting at a time, to see where we go from here. Give us time, to make sure we do this the right way, whether that is one year or five years.”**

**—Kyle Lyddy,**

**Permanent Memorial Commission Chairman**



Photo:

**Charged in September 2013 to investigate whether or not a permanent memorial to 12/14 is appropriate for the community, and if so, what that might look like, the 12 members of the Permanent Memorial Commission have been getting to know one another, defining its mission, and otherwise preparing to take on what could be a daunting task, Permanent**

Charged in September 2013 to investigate whether or not a permanent memorial to 12/14 is appropriate for the community, and if so, what that might look like, the Permanent Memorial Commission of 12 members appointed by First Selectman Pat Llodra has been getting to know

one another, defining its mission, and otherwise preparing to take on what could be a daunting task, said Permanent Memorial Commission Chairman Kyle Lyddy.

Along with Mr Lyddy, JoAnn Bacon, Joanne Brunetti, Steffan Burns, Brian Engel, Daniel Krauss, Agni Pavlidou Kyprianou, Scarlett Lewis, Kyle Lyddy, Alan Martin, Sarah Middleleer, Tricia Pinto, and Donna Van Waalwijk serve on the commission.

The committee seems to be in agreement, said Mr Lyddy, that such a memorial is fitting and that it is an action with which to move forward. Conversations at the most recent meeting, Thursday, January 9, have led to planning “what this could be,” Mr Lyddy said.

The committee is also charged with determining where in the community a permanent memorial might be located, as well as how to fund and maintain any memorial.

After a period of getting to know one another, the committee has been benchmarking other school tragedies and memorials, Mr Lyddy said.

“We have reached out to the president of the 9/11 Commission, and the Columbine committee [formed after the shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado in 1999] has been one of the most amazing we’ve connected to,” Mr Lyddy said. Three members who served on the Columbine memorial committee published a 70-plus-page thesis online, outlining the process and lessons of this commission. While every tragedy and subsequent memorial is unique, he said, he believes the Newtown commission will be able to glean a wealth of information just from this thesis. “What I, personally, took away from this [publication],” he said, “is that there should be no time table to this.”

Mrs Llodra has cautioned the Permanent Memorial Commission that the process will take time.

“We are, after all, 12 strangers coming together and getting to know each other. Now we begin to understand our real charge and get moving,” Mr Lyddy said. “What is important is that we make sure we do it right; and we don’t know what ‘right’ is, yet,” he pointed out.

Newtown is populated with fewer permanent reminders “everywhere you go,” he said. “The ones that have landed here [including the [copper stars on the roof of the Sandy Hook Volunteer Fire & Rescue main station](#) and the [granite memorial located behind St John’s Episcopal Church](#)] are special,” Mr Lyddy observed. There are many factors to take into account in a decision for a town-sanctioned permanent memorial, he said.

“Unarchiving” the list of ideas that came in to the town and organizing those contributions to determine what has already been proposed is the next step, Mr Lyddy said. “We have discussed getting more ideas to come to us. Right now, we are in an information gathering stage, and no decisions are being made,” he emphasized.

The Permanent Memorial Commission wants to put a process into place that will include input from the 26 families directly affected by 12/14.

“We want to be sure that we are sensitive to what the families do or do not want to see,” he said. Four members of the commission are parents of children killed that day, Mr Lyddy said.

The number of opinions that will arise and the timing of the process are seen as the biggest challenges the commission will face, said Mr Lyddy. On January 9, the commission met with representatives of three other local groups, The Newtown Memorial Fund, which he said includes in its mission the raising of funds for a permanent memorial in town; Newtown Cultural Arts Commission, which has housed art donations and tracked memorial suggestions from around the country since 12/14; and Newtown Alumni Association.

“We want to make sure we are not antiproductive to others’ processes,” Mr Lyddy said, and particularly wanted to see if the committee could work in conjunction with Newtown Alumni Association, which has moved forward on its own to implement a permanent memorial in town.

Members are committed to making sure that the process of determining a permanent memorial for Newtown is transparent and open to the public, he said.

“We are taking this one meeting at a time, to see where we go from here. Give us time,” he asked, “to make sure we do this the right way, whether that is one year or five years.”

The Permanent Memorial Commission is next scheduled to meet Thursday, February 13, at 7:30 pm, at Newtown Municipal Center.