

County flag committee wants to rename site

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Staff photo by Cody McDevitt

Stew Saylor, treasurer of the Somerset County Flag Committee, stands next to a monument at the site. Saylor is looking for volunteers and suggestions to rechristen the area with a different name.

The Somerset County Flag Site Committee wants to rename the grounds in which the Stars and Stripes flies over in the community.

“One of the suggestions we had last year from a member is that we should have a sign at the site telling people about it,” said Stew Saylor, treasurer and historian for the committee. “We thought about what we would put on the sign.

“We realized the site itself doesn’t have a name. It’s just called the ‘site of the big flag’ in newspapers. Committees early on haven’t thought of a name. So we’ve been kicking it around. and nothing has

really gained a whole lot of support.”

The flag site will celebrate its 25th anniversary in 2020. This year’s Flag Day will take place on June 14. The history of the endeavor is fascinating.

In the early 1990s, a nationwide effort focused on erecting flag sites in every county in the United States, according to Saylor. It took the local committee two years to raise the initial sum needed to construct the pole, which is located near the Quality Inn beside the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Upon Somerset’s Flagpole Site’s construction, the Daily American hailed the work of the committee in an editorial called “Patriotism still at work.”

“Patriotism and love of country are not concepts that are in the forefront of today’s society,” the editorial writer penned.

“The people who worked on the flag project were making a sincere effort to honor their nation. It is easy to be patriotic when our nation is threatened by outside forces. However, with the end of the cold war, threats to our society are more subtle. Getting a community fired up to contribute to a flag project in these times is a most ambitious challenge.”

Four hundred people attended the first flag-raising ceremony.

The flags are expensive and don’t last long in the winter months. So the committee put up smaller flags in the winter months from November until early May. They fly a larger one in the late spring, summer and early fall.

Usually the lifespan of a flag is one to two months before it has to be brought down for some repairs. The damage is caused by wind, snow and freezing rain. Lynn Keller, of Uniontown, repairs the flags.

The committee seeks new members to help raise the flag and take care of the site.

At least five men are needed to lift the summer flag. Anyone who wants to volunteer or who has a suggested name for the site can email Saylor at ssaylor@earthlink.net.

“We’re always looking for help,” Saylor said. “People who can help get the flags up and down. Site maintenance. It’s just an ongoing effort. We’re always looking for that and suggestions.”