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America 250

In Plaque Discussion, A Debate Over the Fullness of History

BY ANA RISANO || Staff Writer ana@thepilot.com Mar 12, 2026



DAR member Cathy Carpenter discusses the America 250 Patriots marker, which the local chapter asked to display at the Town Hall property before the Council denied the offer.

ANA RISANO / The Pilot

The Southern Pines Town Council has taken a deliberative approach when considering two plaques to display at the new Town Hall, ultimately denying the two markers following individual concerns and ones raised by community members.

On Tuesday, the Council was asked to decide on two items proposed by the Alfred Moore Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution:

* authorization of a letter of support for an American 250 Patriots marker on the new Town Hall property at the corner of Southwest Broad Street and Massachusetts Avenue; and

* acceptance of a flag donation with an associated plaque for the same site.

A majority of the council ultimately rejected each request, with the prevailing sentiment concerned about setting a precedent for markers on community buildings from private entities. The decision to not accept the flag and associated plaque was unanimous. The council had a more in-depth conversation about the America 250 marker, which resulted in a 3-2 vote. The majority agreed the Town Hall was not the right location for such a plaque.

"I am, with tremendous respect for what you do and who you are, I am a hard 'no' as far as having a plaque on a community governmental building that infers that I think everyone who I represent — clearly that is not true — should adopt the policies that either are currently part of the DAR or may have been in the past," Councilwoman Ann Petersen said.

The local DAR presented the offers with chapter regent Marsha Jacobs and member Cathy Carpenter talking about the history of the DAR and why they thought Town Hall was a good location.

The local chapter was established in 1924. Jacobs spoke about the outreach and community work the organization participates in, from providing scholarships to helping with historic preservation and promoting patriotism.

"When it comes to this particular marker that we want to present as a gift to the town of Southern Pines, that recognizes the efforts of everybody who participated in the founding of our country. That's what this marker represents," Jacobs said.

The America 250 Patriots marker, designed by the national DAR, would sayread, "Revolutionary War Patriots: This maker commemorates the men and women who achieved American independence. These Patriots, believing in the noble cause of liberty, fought valiantly to found a new nation."

It would include a note that it was presented by the local DAR chapter in honor of the 250th anniversary of the nation.

Carpenter said the marker is intended to "give people pause to think about the sacrifices made by so many during that time period."

The DAR considered several areas around Moore County before settling on the Southern Pines Town Hall, saying it's located off what used to be called Peed Dee Road — now Broad Street. PeedDee Road was a buffalo trail that became a wagon road for immigrants moving into the western part of the state.

Two community leaders, Tessie Taylor and Dot Brower, spoke against displaying the America 250 marker at Town Hall.

"I am in favor of all parts of American history being recognized in their respective places," Taylor said. "I do not think our Town Hall necessarily needs to start a precedent of having focused organizations being represented within the Town Hall because those spaces are for all of us as community members."

Taylor suggested the marker be located at the Kenneth Black cemetery off Carolina Green Parkway instead. Black was a Loyalist in the war.

She also spoke briefly about the history of the DAR, noting someone can only join if they can prove an ancestral connection to the Revolutionary War. While the DAR has made efforts in the last few decades to be more inclusive, Taylor said people of color did not contribute to the freedom of the nation by choice.

"It's interesting to note that that organization is beginning to recognize African Americans and Native Americans and other minority Ppatriots who contributed to the fight for American independence from England," Taylor said. "However, the majority of the people of color, including the Native Americans, were not freed people. They were in servitude, not by choice but by ownership."

Brower echoed the points raised by Taylor.

"It's the message. Our freedom was not achieved in the Revolutionary War," Brower said. "I would not be proud or want anyone that I know and love to come to my town and see this on public property that our freedom was achieved in the Revolutionary War. No. That is not the case. And it is not history. It is not real history, and it's not true history."

Petersen was the first to voice her hesitation with the offers, noting her family has ties to different DAR chapters and that she won a scholarship from the DAR in high school, writing an essay about what the Constitution means.

"I thought back over the last couple of weeks about what the Constitution means today," Petersen said. "And one of the most important things to me about the Constitution is the right to free speech. And I appreciate very much hearing from all of my constituents.

"Most importantly, I appreciate hearing from the ones with whom I do not agree, or think I don't agree, and talking it out and not getting into a status where we are polarized. I appreciate very much that folks from the community have appeared tonight to express their reservations, and I will be honest with you, I share some of their reservations."

Councilman Bob Curtin, who retired after more than two decades serving in the Army, said he would bleed "red, white and blue" if he fell off a bike and skinned his knee.

"I thought this was going to be a slam dunk for me," Curtin said, before explaining his reflections about the DAR, the complex history of the nation and community feelings.

"My view is that the Daughters of the American Revolution is a very patriotic organization," Curtin said. "It really comes down to what the mayor said, and how I see it — is Town Hall an appropriate location and does it represent all the people?"

He said Town Hall did not seem like the best place for this marker, suggesting it could maybe go somewhere else in town. Council members Bill Pate and Debra Gray agreed.

Pate added, "I do think the 250th anniversary is a neat thing that is worth some celebration..," Pate said.

He also raised a misunderstanding about the signage location, which would not be on the building but freestanding somewhere on the property. It was later suggested near a courtyard that would face Southwest Broad Street.

Petersen, Curtin and Gray voted to reject the marker on Town Hall property. Pate and Mayor Taylor Clement opposed the decision. Pate clarified he is okayOK with the marker but not at Town Hall.

Clement said she wanted to support the council and community members who voiced their opinions on the matter, but added it's a shame "we can't all get behind the fact that we are a country."

"When we were founded, it was not as the perfect nation that we are striving to be, but I don't think that means we don't recognize the history," Clement said.

ANA RISANO

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COMMENT

Sherri Mangum Mar 12, 2026 8:01pm

Thank you for your consideration regarding the plaque, and I respect your decision. Another location may be better suited, and I am sure my Alfred Moore sisters would welcome any recommendations.

I would also like to respectfully correct what I believe were some inaccurate statements made during the council discussion. It is a misconception to suggest that the majority of people of African descent and Native Americans were forced to fight for colonial independence.

Historical records estimate that 5,500 to 8,000 African American, Native American, and mixed-race individuals served as soldiers and sailors for the American Patriot cause during the Revolutionary War, with thousands more supporting the war effort in other roles. These patriots often fought for the ideals of liberty and freedom, as well as personal opportunity, with some seeking emancipation or protesting the injustices they experienced under colonial rule.

Patriots of color served in both integrated units and specialized units, including the 1st Rhode Island Regiment and companies such as that led by David Humphreys. In fact, I believe North Carolina was the first state to have a Sons of the American Revolution chapter named after a free Black patriot.

While many fought for the American cause, others joined the British, who offered freedom to enslaved people following Dunmore's Proclamation in 1775. For those who joined the Patriot side, motivations varied and could include the hope of a new nation, the pursuit of personal liberty, economic opportunity, or a desire to affirm their own agency and place in society.

The Daughters of the American Revolution maintains a Patriots of Color Database that documents these often-overlooked veterans and their contributions. It is also true that despite their service in the American Revolutionary War, many Black and Native American patriots returned to a society that continued to deny them full citizenship, with some even facing increased restrictions after 1783.

Yes, our country has struggled mightily—and still does—for equality of race and gender. For every that very reason, the upcoming America 250 is described as both a celebration and a commemoration. Not everyone living in America today descends from people who originally chose to become part of this nation.

However, we are here today, and hopefully we can continue working together toward the best version of the "United" States of America.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherri Mangum, Regent

Temperance Smith Alston chapter, DAR

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