

CITY OF PALM DESERT STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: March 28, 2024

PREPARED BY: Amy Lawrence, Deputy Director of Economic Development

REQUEST: APPROVE REPLACEMENT OF A BRONZE PLAQUE AT THE DESERT
HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve replacement of a bronze plaque at the *Desert Holocaust Memorial*.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

The *Desert Holocaust Memorial* by Dee Clements was paid for and donated to the City of Palm Desert by the Holocaust Survivors of the Desert in 1995. The memorial, located at the Civic Center Park, took years to plan and construct and was a thoughtful and collaborative process between the donor, the artist, and the City. It sees thousands of visitors each year, including students for educational tours and those gathering annually on Holocaust Remembrance Day.

It was recently brought to the City's attention that the wording used on one of the signs installed at the memorial contains a derogatory term commonly associated with those of Roma/Romani descent. Specifically, the sign describing each figure in the center of the memorial, under "The Dying Man" it references "gypsies" which carries negative connotations.

Staff contacted CEO Alan Potash with Jewish Federation of the Desert to explore changing the language who offered to reach out to multiple people in the field of Holocaust education to get their opinion on updating the wording. Below is what was recommended.

Current language: *"Alone, silent, dying, his death represents the reality of bigotry, ignorance, and hatred that has taken him to its inevitable end. He represents the 11,000,000 million people who died in the Holocaust, Jews, Christians, Gypsies, Mentally Ill, Physically Handicapped, Homosexual and many others, that were killed in the name of Nazism and the sickness it stood for."*

Proposed language: *"Alone, silent, dying, his death represents the reality of bigotry, ignorance, and hatred that has taken him to its inevitable end. He represents the six million Jews and millions of others, including political opponents, homosexuals, disabled, Roma, and others who met their demise due to Nazi persecution and mass murder."*

Legal Review:

This report has been reviewed by the City Attorney's office.

City of Palm Desert

Approve replacement of a bronze plaque at the *Desert Holocaust Memorial*

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The cost to replace the sign to include installation should not exceed \$3,500. Funding for this is available in the Public Art Fund.

ATTACHMENT:

Photo of the current sign at the *Desert Holocaust Memorial*.