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Victory! No Funding for Police Drones

by Doug Olson

Brainerd, Minnesota area peace activists scored a significant victory in May 2016 when the city council of nearby Baxter declined a motion to approve a request by the Baxter Police Department to apply for \$50,000 in funding to purchase three drones. The motion deadlocked and failed on a tie vote of two to two.

In the debate over the drone funding request, Baxter Mayor Darrel Olson noted drones are not popular with people. He referenced protests outside Camp Ripley's Main Gate:

The Camp Ripley protests referred to by Mayor Olson are organized by Brainerd Area Coalition for Peace (BACP), an informal organization of dedicated peace activists. BACP was originally formed in October 2001 to protest against the U.S./NATO bombing of Afghanistan and has opposed all U.S. wars since. In addition to hosting peace vigils, members march in the Brainerd Fourth of July parade and host a booth at the Crow Wing County Fair. Protests against Camp Ripley's drone pilot training program began in August 2012.

BACP holds peace vigils outside Camp Ripley's Main Gate when Camp Ripley hosts its biannual Open House Day inviting the public inside the base. The vigil's pro-peace message counters the pro-war propaganda Camp Ripley spreads. Many members of Women Against Military Madness (WAMM), Veterans for Peace (VFP), and Grand Rapids Peace Circle/VFP joined the 2012, 2013, and 2015 vigils. Some Franciscan Sisters from the Little Falls, Minnesota convent also joined the vigils.

BACP encourages fellow peace activists and anyone opposed to war and militarism, including militarization of police, to join the Camp Ripley peace vigil in September of 2017.

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Endnote:

- "Baxter City Council: Tie Vote Stops Application for Drone Funding."
Renee Richardson. *Brainerd Dispatch*. Friday, May 20, 2016. tinyurl.com/lk4pzsr