

**GREENWOOD CEMETERY ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, JUNE 3, 2016 AT 8:30 AM
MUNICIPAL BUILDING, ROOM 205, 151 MARTIN**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Darlene Gehringer, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Linda Peterson
Kevin Desmond
Margaret Suter
Darlene Gehringer
Laura Schreiner
Linda Buchanan
George Stern

Absent: None

Administration: Laura Pierce, City Clerk
Cheryl Arft, Deputy City Clerk

Guests: Cheri Arcome, Elmwood Cemetery

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Pierce noted that minutes will be approved at the July meeting.

IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. 2015 Annual Report

Ms. Pierce stated the report was updated from the last meeting, and is being presented for a final review before being submitted to the City Commission on June 27th.

Ms. Suter suggested changes to the chart of Total City Percentage (75% of the sale paid to the city) on page 8 in Section 4. In the 3rd quarter, under the Grave Sales column, the amount should be \$88,312.50. The total amount should be \$88,351.66. In the Year to Date column, the figure in Grave Sales should be changed to \$186,375.00, and the Total Year to Date figure should be \$186,560.30.

Ms. Buchanan asked for specifics of the contractor's expenditures for the cemetery management as well as their revenue from the grave sales. Ms. Pierce said those figures will be in a separate report to the City Commission that is presented at the June 27th meeting in addition to the Annual Report. The board will receive the separate report at its July meeting. Ms. Schreiner said we need to look at what the cost to the city would be.

Mr. Stern said the statement is misleading as printed. It should be pointed out that the contractor is receiving payment from the deceased families for the other services it provides. Ms. Gehringer suggested eliminating the section "at no cost to the City", in the paragraph beneath the contractor's percentage chart. The sentence will read "In addition to grave sales,

the Contractor also provides cemetery management services for the operation of Greenwood Cemetery.”

Mr. Stern asked when the Clerk plans to present Public Act 13 to the City Commission for its enactment. Ms. Pierce stated there are no plans at this time to bring PA 13 forward, and that this is the 2015 Annual Report.

Mr. Stern said the interest earned on the investment in the Perpetual Care Fund is at the rate of ~~.08%~~ 0.8%. He noted that the interest earns a return on the city pension funds of 4%, and if the Perpetual Care Fund was invested in the same way as the pension funds are, we would make an additional 3% return. In light of that, the board should pass a resolution following up on the Mayor’s comments at the budget meeting recommending that the city adopt PA 13. He clarified that she brought up PA 13 and said it was brought up with the full expectation that the city would adopt it prior to May 16th when it became effective. He thinks it is incumbent on this board to recommend to the commission that it adopt PA 13.

Ms. Gehringer reminded the board that this report is for 2015 activity. She said without direction from the City Commission to study this, she does not believe we can do anything other than add it to our 2016 goals. She believes the pension fund gets a higher return because it is a large fund.

In the first sentence on page 1, Mr. Stern suggested removing the second “the”. Ms. Pierce noted this is the cover page, and will not be included in the Annual Report to the City Commission.

Mr. Stern is still concerned relative to flush markers in different sections of the cemetery. Ms. Pierce said the rules and regulations state flush markers only in sections B, C, D, K, L and O. He thinks the board should point out the percentage of graves sold other than in B and C, and that it is time for reclamation, as we are running out of graves.

Mr. Stern commented that on page 7, he thinks the clause on the ~~interest~~ deferred payment plan is in direct violation of the contract between the city and the contractor, particular appendix D which is included in the RFP which is included in the contact. He consulted an attorney as to his personal liability knowing that this is a violation of the contract. He thinks pointing it out to the City Commission in some way alleviates us from our personal liability for violating the contract, but he thinks we could use a stronger word to indicate that it is a change, and in his opinion, a violation of the contract.

Mr. Desmond and Ms. Gehringer asked what is the violation. Mr. Stern said there is no such rule in the regulations and Ms. Arcome made it up that we can have a 0% interest payment plan. Ms. Pierce said it is a service offered by the contractor. He said Ms. Arcome put into effect a new regulation and it has to be approved by the city. Mr. Stern stated his opinion that it is a violation of the contract.

Ms. Schreiner suggested deleting the paragraph regarding the payment plan. Mr. Stern agrees and wants to discuss the issue to notify the city that it is a violation of the contract.

Ms. Arcome explained the burial fee for cremations. The original grave purchase did not include second or third rights of burial.

Mr. Desmond explained that when a gravesite is purchased, it is a right of burial, not the real estate. If a second urn is placed in the grave, a second right of burial is purchased. A

purchaser receives a Burial Right Certificate when purchasing a gravesite. There is another set of fees for the actual burial of the deceased.

MOTION: Motion by Schreiner, seconded by Peterson:
To approve the Greenwood Cemetery Advisory Board 2015 Annual Report, as amended.

Mr. Stern is not voting for the motion, unless a cover letter is attached pointing out the new PA 13 and the need for reclamation.

Vote: Yeas: 6
Nays: 1 (Stern)
Absent: None

Ms. Gehring suggested placing the discussion of Public Act 13 under New Business at the next meeting.

MOTION: Motion by Stern, seconded by Peterson:
To discuss at the next meeting the status of Public Act 13 and if not present it to the commission by that time, we discuss making such a proposal to the commission. Secondly, that we discuss the need for reclamation.

Mr. Stern thinks it is important to have this on the upcoming agenda in order to obtain a clarification of the attorney's letter from last August.

VOTE: Yeas: 7
Nays: None
Absent: None

MOTION: Motion by Stern, seconded by Peterson:
In light of the 2015 report showing the sales in areas other than B and C, that we discuss a resolution to the commission adopting the Public Act amending Public Act 251 to adopt a new state public act allowing municipal cemeteries a procedure for reclamation.

Mr. Stern continued that he would like to discuss the new public act in order to make a proposal to the commission to adopt it.

Ms. Gehring explained that this motion would move the discussion higher in the priorities list.

Ms. Peterson reminded the board that we discussed that the priorities list is not written in stone, and however the board decides to attack it, we can change the order.

Mr. Stern said the public act was passed specifically for municipalities and we could adopt it as other municipalities have done.

Ms. Gehring suggested resolving digitization of the cemetery records and then re-prioritize our goals as the board sees fit. She agrees we should discuss PA 13 after we finish digitization. She prefers to focus on one issue at a time. Ms. Peterson agreed.

Ms. Schreiner agreed that the board needs to re-prioritize, and agreed with Ms. Gehring that the board should focus on one item at a time at the next meeting. She said the two items Mr. Stern has asked to be added to the agenda are important, and both require legal input. We need to allow sufficient time to obtain the legal input and once it is received by the board, we

need to allocate the time for the board to consider the information we receive. She suggested we place it on the August agenda.

Ms. Gehringer clarified for the board that this motion is to place the PA 13 discussion on the July agenda.

VOTE: Yeas: 1 (Stern)
 Nays: 6
 Absent: None

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Digitization of Cemetery Records
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Ms. Pierce reviewed the background information provided for the board of what the city currently has and is currently using to track cemetery records. She explained that the hard copies of the records in the Clerk's Office, and each transaction, deed, burial, and foundation order has been scanned into the city's imaging system. The contractor also has a copy of the imaged files. She asked that the board discuss what the goals are for the digitized files, such as online access to the public for ancestry purposes, what types of mailing the board might want to do, and what information would the board like available to public. That might include deeds, contact information, name and date of death, and date of burial. Once those decisions are made, staff can move forward and research the best possible program for our needs and to accomplish the goals.

Ms. Gehringer would like to add military records and/or awards to the list of information digitized and available to the public.

Ms. Pierce commented that at the April meeting, there was a motion on the table to ask IT for a review of systems to track the cemetery. The board will need to pick up that motion in order to discuss it.

The motion read: To ask for an IT review of systems to track the cemetery.

MOTION: Motion by Schreiner, seconded by Peterson:
To pick up the motion made by Mr. Stern on April 1, 2016 regarding the review of IT systems.

VOTE: Yeas: 7
 Nays: 0
 Absent: None

Mr. Stern reviewed what research he and Ms. Gehringer conducted previously, where they found Pontem Cemetery Software Suite. He said the cost was about \$1500 initially, and is used by several hundred cemeteries around the country, including many in Michigan. He said a webinar is available for the IT staff to assist in evaluation of the software. He suggested that would be easy to install and use by volunteers. He said he could locate people with IT background to assist with input at no cost and no time to the city. There may be other software systems also to review.

Ms. Gehringer added that during her conversation with the Pontem representative, they offered to scan all the city records and they would be digitized and that was included in the cost. There may be an annual cost of approximately \$40.

Ms. Schreiner suggested the board should determine and establish its goals before choosing a particular software.

Ms. Gehringer said that the program that Elmwood uses is antiquated, according to a company she spoke with.

Ms. Pierce asked to focus on the purpose for digitizing records, and the city's staff will research the software available once the purpose has been established.

Ms. Arcome said all of the city records are already scanned, and those scanned records may be used so that work would not have to be repeated. Both the city and the contractor have those scanned records.

Ms. Schreiner thinks that there are a couple tiers of how we want things, because what we make available to the public may be different from what the city wants in its records. In general, birth date, date of death, name and military records. She is concerned about privacy and prefers not to have contact or even address information on a website. The board members agree, and also not include cause of death. Death certificates are available publicly at other locations. Publishing the contact information also becomes burdensome to the city to keep updated.

Ms. Peterson asked if we should include the parents' names, or city where they were buried. Ms. Buchanan suggested the grave location could be included.

Mr. Desmond asked how it would be accessible by the public. The board agreed it should be on the city website.

Ms. Schreiner asked if we wanted to allow the public access to add their photos and comments. The board agreed the public should not have any input on the records, and would be done by city.

Mr. Desmond suggested from the discussion and agreement to provide very basic information, that cemetery management software may not be needed. He said it could be a very simple database through the city's website to access the information.

Mr. Stern said that we should certainly have a software system that the city owns, in the event we lose the contractor. Mr. Desmond stated the city already has the records electronically scanned. He does not think cemetery management software is required for what the board has determined so far what the purpose is for the information. It seems as though the software systems being discussed and what the board has in mind for the public use are two different things.

Ms. Suter said we need the ability to make adjustments as people are buried. Mr. Stern said the software being discussed interfaces to a GIS system and has a separate area for veteran status. As an example, a list or map could print out a list of veterans which would easily assist groups who place flags.

Ms. Gehringer suggested that board members contact different cemeteries to ask what programs they use for the public before the next meeting. Ms. Pierce asked that the links to the websites be sent to her and she will make it available to each board member.

Ms. Buchanan explained that the management software could be used by the city or contractor for day to day purposes, and the public access website would use only the information contained in the management software which is restricted for privacy reasons.

Discussion continued as to funeral home information on a public site and the necessity for it.

VOTE: Yeas: 7
 Nays: None
 Absent: None

VI. CONTRACTOR REPORT

Ms. Arcome reported that they have been busy. The cemetery looks wonderful and has received compliments on the upkeep and on the responsiveness when installing foundations.

Ms. Suter asked when grass seed is put down after a burial. Ms. Arcome responded that it depends on the time of the year. Seeding is not done during the month of July. Seeding has been going on this spring, weather permitting. Typically, seeding occurs about a week to ten days after a burial.

Ms. Buchanan asked for the progress on the interest list. Ms. Arcome responded that the list has over 300 names now, and she is over half way through the list.

Ms. Arcome said typically, no one comes to the cemetery prepared to purchase a gravesite. It is usually two to three visits before someone purchases. She now has a list of about 30 people who must decide on a purchase. She said in the winter, she allows 30 days for a reservation, but she does not keep them as long now. She has 25 contracts out at the moment waiting for signatures and funds. There is a lot of activity with people on the interest list.

She has had people no longer interested in purchasing a gravesite who were on the interest list. She has been able to contact people through internet access if the contact information we had was no longer good. She also checks for obituaries prior to sending out a communication to someone on the interest list.

Ms. Gehringer said the grounds have never looked better. She mentioned a shepherd's hook on one of the gravesites. The family has been notified and the contractor has been working with them about the issue. Ms. Arcome explains the rules and regulations carefully to every purchaser.

Ms. Schreiner said Ms. Arcome's observations are good for us to keep in mind when we review the rules and regulations and when educating the public about Greenwood.

Ms. Desmond added that working with the contractor has been very professional and competent, and their service to the families has been very accommodating and flexible. He complimented the grounds crew and their professionalism during services.

Mr. Stern asked how Ms. Arcome handled the presentation that Elmwood held at a church recently. She explained that it was an educational opportunity for its members regarding death and dying. She said this is done every few years at local churches. There was no selling, only dissemination of information.

Mr. Desmond noted that Desmond Funeral Home participation was through one of its employees who is a member at the church.

VII. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC FOR MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA

VIII. BOARD COMMENTS

Ms. Gehringer said in December 2015, a motion was passed for GPR. Ms. Pierce said that it will be presented for the next budget.

Ms. Buchanan asked what the next month's agenda would contain. Ms. Gehringer responded that the digitization of cemetery records will continue as Unfinished Business, and New Business will be Mr. Stern's request. The next meeting will be July 8, 2016.

IX. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:57 AM.

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