

**GREENWOOD CEMETERY ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2016 AT 8:30 AM
MUNICIPAL BUILDING, ROOM 205, 151 MARTIN**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Darlene Gehringer called the meeting to order at 8:32 AM.

II. ROLL CALL

ROLL CALL: Present: Margaret Suter
Darlene Gehringer
Laura Schreiner
Linda Peterson Buchanan
George Stern

Absent: Kevin Desmond
Linda Peterson

Administration: Cheryl Arft, Acting City Clerk

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 14, 2016

Mr. Stern asked for the following changes: add a letter "s" to the second word Board on page 3, in the first line on the last paragraph; remove the word "on" on page 4 in the last line of the second paragraph under section F.

Mr. Stern suggested that Ms. Suter clarify her statement on page 5 when she said "the contract would have to be changed". Ms. Suter clarified she meant that to be absolutely clear, it should be spelled out in the contract exactly what they should be reporting to us.

Ms. Gehringer asked if the first motion on page two should be changed to "east", rather than "west". After discussion, it was agreed the motion is correct as stated.

MOTION: Motion by Suter, seconded by Stern:
To approve the minutes of October 14, 2016, as amended.

VOTE: Yeas, 5
Nays, 0
Absent, 2 (Desmond, Peterson)

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. UPDATE ON PONTEM AND BS&A

Ms. Gehringer said neither company could make it for a presentation today. The Clerk's staff will contact their representatives for a future date.

Ms. Gehringer noted that Bruce Chaney from Gateway Mapping has been in contact with her and the Clerk's Office. He offered to do a webinar. The company is registering to be a vendor on the Michigan Inter-Governmental Trade Network, which will enable them to be notified when a Request for Proposal is issued for services the cemetery may need.

B. REVIEW OF THE CEMETERY RULES AND REGULATIONS RE: MONUMARK/QR CODES

Ms. Arft provided some information she had gathered from Ms. Pielack, Museum Director, about Monumark. Ms. Pielack had done some research on Monumark and found that it is a social-media type of service offered to families. A sticker containing a QR code is placed on the monument or marker, and it can be scanned to bring up a page for the deceased individual. On the page, visitors may leave tributes, comments, and share pictures. There is an annual fee associated with the service.

Ms. Buchanan said her concern was the historical designation of the cemetery, and whether that would be considered defacing historical stones.

Ms. Suter suggested the sticker be placed on the map of the cemetery for only the historical monuments.

Ms. Gehringer asked who would pay for that on the historical markers. Ms. Schreiner suggested the museum might undertake it.

Ms. Buchanan suggested we may not be able to mark the historical monuments, and is concerned about doing so.

Ms. Schreiner expressed concern about who would be in control of the location of the Monumark label and changing the character of the cemetery. She suggested it might be something for an interactive map.

Mr. Stern thinks it would enhance the stone. He thinks it could be a huge fundraiser for the Friends and for the cemetery, and it could be a marvelous addition to cemetery services.

Ms. Suter said if we start ~~doing this~~ putting stickers, etc. on the monuments themselves, what is to stop anyone from adding ~~anything to~~ their personal items on a monument.

Ms. Gehringer said the headstones that have the QR codes now belong to the family and are not historical monuments.

C. APPROVAL OF THE 2017 MEETING SCHEDULE

Ms. Arft presented the proposed 2017 meeting dates.

MOTION: Motion by Suter, seconded by Schreiner:
To approve the 2017 meeting schedule as presented.

VOTE: Yeas, 5
Nays, None
Absent, 2 (Desmond, Peterson)

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Items under Pending will be presented as a verbal status update to the Board and may not require action at this time.

A. JULY 11, 2016 CITY COMMISSION MEETING COMMENTS

Mr. Stern asked that the Board change the order of the agenda at this time to discuss the comments made at the City Commission meeting on December 5, 2016. He feels that comments are relevant to the remainder of our discussion.

Ms. Arft briefly reviewed the July 11, 2016 City Commission minutes.

Ms. Suter asked if anything additional has been discussed by the Commission relative to reclamation.

Ms. Arft noted that the Board has not proposed anything further on that topic. She said the Action List which is to be discussed later in this meeting, is close to being presented to the Commission. Once the Commission reviews the Action List, it may choose to re-prioritize the items, giving direction to the Board.

Ms. Gehringer recalled from the July Commission meeting, there was a difference in opinion as to reclamation.

Ms. Suter asked which meeting it might be discussed. Ms. Arft suggested it would be in January or February.

Mr. Stern said that the City Attorney wrote that Public Act 215 does recognize that a municipal corporation may pass ordinances necessary to regulate the municipal corporation cemetery. The question for the Commission therefore, is whether they wish to pass any additional regulations with respect to the cemetery. At the present time, the Commission has not adopted the Public Act. Mr. Stern said the Commission probably will approve adoption of that ordinance, and he imagines that they will then send it to the Board for implementation. The fear that the Commission showed repeatedly, especially by Commissioner Sherman, was that the citizens are hearing lots of rumors because there are no rules as to how it is going to be implemented. Mr. Stern's assumption is that the Commission will simply approve adoption of the ordinance and then say it cannot implement it until such time as the rules under which it will be implemented are developed, along with a plan for publicity to the public.

Mr. Stern said the question of resident vs. non-resident fees was discussed during the advisory committee as to whether or not the cemetery was a park. The City Attorney ruled it was not a park and therefore the investment of funds could not be made under the park ordinance, but had to be made under a separate ordinance. The state passed a law which enabled the City to set up a separate perpetual care fund. Mr. Stern said the Board should keep in mind that this is not a park, because when you read the minutes of the July 11th meeting, the City Attorney is constantly saying we are under judicial regulation and decision-making on parks. Mr. Stern said we are either a park or we are not a park. Mr. Stern said if we are not a park for the perpetual care fund, then we are not a park for fees.

Mr. Stern said the City Attorney also made the point that there has to be some City expense in order to have differential fees. The City Manager went on to say that, in fact, the City is doing structural maintenance at the cemetery so it does comply with the City Attorney's ruling that there has to be some City expense in order to have differential fees. In both cases, he thinks the Board has permission and, in fact, ruling that we can look at differential fees for residents vs. non-residents.

MOTION: Motion by Stern:

To allow Board comments at this time to cover the issue of the Commission meeting of December 5, 2016.

Motion failed for lack of support.

B. NATIONAL HISTORIC DESIGNATION OF CEMETERY

Ms. Buchanan said she has called Dr. Christiansen for a physical visit in order to apply for the national historic designation of the cemetery. She believes the earliest we could apply now is May 2017.

C. DIGITIZATION OF CEMETERY RECORDS

Ms. Arft commented that we are in the process of scheduling the software representatives to attend a Board meeting. In the meantime, as burials are taking place, our records are being updated in the BS&A cemetery software program.

D. DONOR RECOGNITION PROGRAM-FINAL

Ms. Arft noted that the Board has finalized the donor recognition program, and thereafter, it was given to the City Manager and City Attorney for their review. Both have reviewed it now, and the Board asked to see it one more time.

Mr. Stern said it is a nice first draft that needs a lot of work. Ms. Arft said it was finalized at the last meeting.

Ms. Gehringer noted that the Board has approved this as the final version. She said it is not a draft.

Mr. Stern said he thought it was a concept, but that the Board had not approved every word.

Ms. Arft said the policy was sent to the City Manager and City Attorney after the Board approved it.

Ms. Buchanan expressed satisfaction with the policy.

Ms. Schreiner said we should remember that this policy was based on the City's general donation policy. Ms. Gehringer agreed, and said we adjusted it to fit our needs.

Mr. Stern expressed some of his concerns with the policy. He will not vote to approve it.

Ms. Gehringer said she is happy with the policy.

Ms. Buchanan said she likes the fact that the policy satisfies a true cemetery need.

Ms. Arft said the policy came back to the Board today for a final review as requested, and now will be scheduled by the City Manager for a future City Commission meeting for their consideration.

Ms. Schreiner agreed with Mr. Stern that we might want to consider adding the words "or remove" to Section E.

Ms. Gehringer agreed to the word addition.

Ms. Arft said she will add those words to Section E, and forward it to the City Manager. She asked if the Board wished to review it another time before submission to the Commission.

Ms. Schreiner suggested that she does not need to see the policy again, unless there would be a substantive change suggested by the City Manager.

Mr. Stern expressed a concern about duplication in the policy

Ms. Suter said the statements are different, in that one statement refers to donation categories, and the other refers to donation guidelines. Ms. Schreiner said the statements are not in conflict.

MOTION: Motion by Buchanan, seconded by Suter:

To approve the final draft of the Donor Recognition Policy, with the addition of the words “or remove” to Section E of the policy.

VOTE: Yeas, 5
 Nays, None
 Absent, 2 (Desmond, Peterson)

E. REQUEST FOR RFP FOR GPR SERVICES IN THE CEMETERY

F. REQUEST FOR RFP FOR MASTER PLAN OF THE CEMETERY

Ms. Arft explained that the requests for RFPs for these items will be submitted in the upcoming year’s budget.

Ms. Gehringer expressed concern that this request has been delayed for a year. She said these are very important items to the Board.

Mr. Stern said it is important to emphasize that the Board would like the cemetery to be a separate budget item. He said that last year the cemetery was dismissed from the budget. He said that the City Manager defined the cemetery structural improvements as being in the Parks budget, and there is no cemetery budget since there is no expense. Mr. Stern said we should encourage the cemetery to be a budget item, and he encouraged the City Manager to allow the cemetery to be a budget item in this year’s budget.

Ms. Gehringer agreed, and said that we now have funds and she believes we should have a budget.

G. AMENDMENT TO THE CEMETERY CONTRACT WITH ELMWOOD

Ms. Gehringer explained that the contract will be on the next agenda under Unfinished Business.

VI. CONTRACTOR REPORT

A. THIRD QUARTER REPORT
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Mr. Stern commented that the report notes that there are 14 available plots in Section G. He said that the Annual Report was made to the City Commission that all plots in Sections G and E had been sold and there were no available plots. He said that suddenly we have 14 plots available in Section G.

Ms. Gehringer suggested that those may be the 14 plots that were on hold. Mr. Stern was concerned that the Commission was told one thing and now the report indicates something else. He expressed concern that the plots may or may not exist, and if they do exist, some comments were made last Monday at the Commission that were inaccurate.

Ms. Gehringer asked the Clerk to check on this and determine if those are graves that were on hold.

Mr. Stern said he did not think there were 28 plots in Section G that were discovered. He thinks it was 14, and that they were sold, and does not think they are remaining.

Ms. Gehringer asked about the note regarding a space in Section G that was an existing developed space once occupied by a tree. Ms. Arft explained that the Contractor advised that a family contacted her who had a family member was quite ill. The family asked if there were any plots available near where they had previously purchased in the area. The Contractor looked at the area and determined that a grave could be located where the tree had been removed.

Ms. Gehringer expressed concern that this was done without the knowledge of the Board. She noted that perhaps the City was planning to put another tree there. She said that the Board has plans to have more landscaping put in the cemetery, and this may have interfered with the plans.

Ms. Schreiner said her impression is that it already was an existing space that was owned by the City with a tree on it, so the Contractor did not create a new one.

Ms. Gehringer said if it was an existing grave, the Contractor would not get a Commission on it because it was not a newly designated grave.

Ms. Schreiner said the Contractor would still get the Commission on the sale of the grave.

Mr. Stern said the City Manager ruled some time ago that the Contractor will get paid for anything they can think of, and we are not going to question it.

Ms. Gehringer said it is a violation of the contract. Mr. Stern agreed, and said the City Manager has indicated that he is the superintendent, and he has the right to do that.

Mr. Stern said he expressed his opinion both to the City Manager and the Board at the time that he felt it was wrong for the City Manager to do it, but the City Manager said he had the power to do it, and he did not want to appeal it.

Ms. Suter said the Board seems to be left out of the loop for many things regarding the Contractor, and she expressed concern about it.

Ms. Buchanan said landscaping is a priority; it has to be planned for, and graves cannot be put in every spot. Ms. Suter agreed, and asked if that would be part of the Master Plan.

Ms. Schreiner suggested that over time, there have been many people involved with the cemetery. She added that part of the reason this Contractor was selected was it respects historical characteristics of cemeteries. She hopes the Contractor is coordinating with the City in terms of trees and replacement. She added that, while the Board would like more involvement in those decisions, because of time frames, that is not always practical. She said the Board should be updated, the Board's questions should be answered, and their concerns should be considered.

Ms. Suter suggested that when the Board gets to the Master Plan, the Board could decide on tree placement and replacement.

Ms. Gehringer would like to know if the space was an existing developed space.

Ms. Buchanan said DPS is planning to plant trees along the easement of the fence to shade the area.

Ms. Gehringer commented that the new format of the report is self-explanatory and is orderly; she likes it very much. She asked that previous quarterly information be formatted in this way and the Board can see all activities from the inception of the contract.

Ms. Buchanan said that in addition to the percentage of each grave sale that the Contractor receives, it also gets other fees. Their total income is much higher, and she would like the Board to know that amount.

Mr. Stern said he has reported to the City Commission what he thinks the Contractor is making based on the quarterly reports. He said in some cases, the Contractor is making a 93% profit margin, and making ~~\$1,500.00~~ \$1,500 an hour for their work. He said it is exorbitant, and it should not be allowed. He agrees that the Contractor should be reporting that amount to the Board.

Ms. Buchanan believes we should have a total picture of the financial information.

Ms. Suter commented that she would like to see a map showing which plots are sold and which are pending with the quarterly report to give the Board a clearer idea of the location of graves being sold.

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

VIII. BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Stern commented about the December 5, 2016 City Commission discussion about Mr. Paul Robertson's request to place a monument on his graves in Section F-North, where only flush markers are permitted. He said the Commission discussed the Board's lack of action in general, and in Section F-North specifically. He said by discussing this, he hopes to help make the Board more productive.

He provided the following suggestions for discussion by the Board: revisit the restriction on monuments in sections other than B & C. He said the restriction is not in keeping with existing formats, and it promotes walking on graves. He suggested removing the roadway between sections K & L for burials with monuments. He suggested the Board recommend the City Commission recommend adopting Public Act 215, Section 456.537, which would allow the City to reclaim lots abandoned for 60 years, and advise the Commission how to implement the law to maximize citizen approval and minimize citizen anxiety. He strongly feels that the Board needs to find spaces for monuments to be erected.

Ms. Suter noted Greenwood has a historical designation, and therefore the road cannot be changed. Mr. Stern suggested that a waiver to that restriction could be filed.

Mr. Stern was asked to provide copies of his comments to the Board members.

IX. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 10:14 AM.

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