

**GREENWOOD CEMETERY ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, AUGUST 4, 2017 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: Margaret Suter
Darlene Gehringer
Linda Buchanan
Laura Schreiner
George Stern

ABSENT: Linda Peterson
Kevin Desmond

Administration: Clerk Brown, Deputy Clerk Arft

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF JULY 21, 2017

MOTION: Motion by Buchanan, seconded by Gehringer:
To approve the minutes of July 21, 2017, as presented.

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

IV. NEW BUSINESS

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

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

A. REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS - MASTER PLAN FOR CEMETERY

Clerk Brown informed the board members that the Commission will not need to approve the RFP. She noted that the minor changes made last time were to the schedule.

Ms. Gehringer said we would like to approve the RFP today to begin the process. She noted that the Board went through it quite thoroughly, and she is hoping for no amendments today.

In response to Ms. Buchanan's question, Clerk Brown explained what the Michigan Intergovernmental Trade Network (MITN) is and how it works for the RFP process.

Ms. Suter questioned the term "lot owners" in the Scope of Work section on page 4, item 2. Clerk Brown said it refers to owners of cemetery lots. It was suggested the reference be changed to "plot" owners. Ms. Brown noted the clarification would not delay the issuance of the RFP.

MOTION: Motion by Suter, seconded by Buchanan:

To approve the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Greenwood Cemetery Master Plan, as amended.

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

Clerk Brown said the Board had talked at the last meeting about changing the regular meeting date in November from November 3rd to November 17th, and she asked for a formal resolution to that effect. In addition, she requested a formal resolution on a new December meeting date. She noted that the Clerk's staff will be in Oakland County for new election equipment training in September, and suggested that the September meeting be cancelled. She noted for Mr. Stern that the October 6th meeting will remain as scheduled.

MOTION: Motion by Suter, seconded by Schreiner:
To change the regular meeting date of November 3, 2017 to November 17, 2017 at 8:30 AM;
To change the regular meeting date of December 1, 2017 to December 8, 2017 at 8:30 AM;
To cancel the regular meeting September 1, 2017.

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

B. RECOMMENDATION FOR AMENDMENT TO THE CEMETERY CONTRACT WITH ELMWOOD REGARDING PAYMENT PLANS

Ms. Gehring reviewed other cemeteries' policies and reported that some charge interest, while others do not. She noted that the majority of the commissioners did not want to charge interest. Some cities do set a time limit on the payment plan. She said she is unsure if our contractor sets a time limit. She suggested the Board put in writing that we are going to adopt a payment plan and the rules and regulations regarding payment plans. She suggested a down payment at the time of entering into the payment plan, as well as not charging interest.

Ms. Schreiner said that when she went through the purchase process, she was told by the contractor that there was an option for payments. She recalled that there was an immediate payment requirement with a time limit. She agreed that this needs to be formalized.

Ms. Gehring asked that the Clerk discuss what the contractor's current practice is for Greenwood purchases.

Ms. Suter expressed concern about being paid from an estate.

Ms. Gehring questioned whether reimbursements are made if a purchaser decides to not complete the payment plan or decides that the plot is no longer wanted. She noted that when plots are held, other cemeteries require a non-refundable fee to hold the plots.

Ms. Schreiner said we need to determine how the contractor handles these situations and then discuss if it is what the Board is comfortable with, as well as investigate what other cemeteries practices are.

Ms. Gehring noted that other cemeteries require a non-refundable "holding fee" to hold a plot or plots.

Mr. Stern asked for clarification of where the payments go during the time a plot is being paid off.

Mr. Stern suggested that the contractor be wary of people who buy multiple plots, and how the deceased are being buried in the plots so as not to ruin the resale value of the total parcel.

Clerk Brown will report to the Board at the October meeting.

Clerk Brown contacted DPS about the east gate, which has been removed, and extensive repairs will be made.

Clerk Brown reported that she will be meeting with the contractor about the quarterly reports, and she will provide a report of that meeting in October.

Clerk Brown suggested that the Board add its annual report to an agenda early in 2018.

VI. CONTRACTOR REPORT

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

VIII. BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Stern commented that one of the tasks assigned to this Board is to develop a response to future demands for cemetery services. He said that is part of the Master Plan process. He suggested that a 100 year horizon should be used. Mr. Stern took issue with the statement in the minutes of the last meeting that the Board is not tasked with looking at additional property.

Ms. Gehringer asked if he is referring to the master plan about the City buying more property.

Mr. Stern provided background to the Board about two parcels of property that the Advisory Committee considered, one of which adjoined the cemetery. He said he and Mr. Share developed a plan of plots on it. It was decided that the discussion would not be appropriate at a City Commission meeting relative to the cost. He and Mr. Share met with the City Manager and spoke specifically about at what price the City could break even.

At this point, Ms. Gehringer interrupted Mr. Stern, because he was not addressing the minutes. She does not understand what the meeting he referred to has to do with the minutes of the last Board meeting. She said he has talked about this before, and everyone's time must be respected, and we cannot talk about the same thing over and over again at meetings.

Mr. Stern disagreed, and said that if Ms. Gehringer is not willing to let a Board member make a comment, she may step down as Chairman.

Ms. Gehringer ruled Mr. Stern out of order. She is limiting Board members to five minutes for comments.

Ms. Buchanan reported that neighbors of the cemetery have reported to her that spirits have been seen in the cemetery on occasion on full moon nights. She informed the Board that spiritual societies exist and thought that type of group might be interested in Greenwood because of its age and history.

Ms. Schreiner commented that the repaired gate will help.

Mr. Stern suggested that we use this as a marketing opportunity and charge admission to be used for maintenance.

Mr. Stern commented on the possible acquisition of property adjacent to the cemetery, as historic context for current Board members. The Advisory Committee recommended that the City keep abreast of the property in the event it became available. He added that the City Commission did not mention that they would not look at additional property. He thinks it is incumbent upon the Board to advise the City, particularly with a 100 year outlook, that additional property may be necessary for the cemetery.

Ms. Gehringer recalled the meeting, and that the City Commission did say they were not interested in purchasing the property because of the price, nor were they interested in expanding Greenwood Cemetery at all.

Ms. Schreiner added that there were some issues in terms of access. There were several obstacles to purchasing the property.

Mr. Stern said it is incumbent upon the Board to talk with the City about integrating our strategic plan with the City's strategic plan, so that if there needs to be additional property in the City allocated for cemeteries, that the City has the background information.

Clerk Brown suggested that would fall under optimizing space, and would be the subject of the public meetings, receive input, and the consultant would come back with recommendations.

Ms. Suter commented that the adjacent land in question is in a residential area, which might involve re-zoning, and a loss of revenue to the City in taxes. It is a multi-faceted topic.

Mr. Stern disagreed again with the thought that we are not running a business, and said the cemetery is similar to the golf courses. When the Commission decided to hire Ms. Brito and make the golf courses more independent, they were careful to point out that they were upset that the courses were being run at a loss and had been for many years, and encouraged her to do such things as getting a liquor license. She has been creative in finding ways to make the golf courses self-sufficient. He said he did not think the Commission has told us that we cannot look at, or give them advice, as to how money can be made or revenue enhanced at the cemetery.

Clerk Brown reviewed the Board's statutory duties.

Mr. Stern said there are at least two provisions either in the Rules and Regulations or the contract inhibiting us from giving revenue to the City, and he said he hopes that in the future, we can look at those to see how they can be modified to enhance revenue to the City.

Clerk Brown said included in the scope of work in the RFP is a complete review of all the documents.

Ms. Gehringer added that she understands that Mr. Stern is very interested in enhancing revenue to the City and she appreciates that approach. She said the Commission said it was not interested in selling monuments, vaults, flowers, etc.

Mr. Stern said he is hopeful that the City is not so rigid that they will not look at a policy set in the past.

IX. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 9:19 am