

**GREENWOOD CEMETERY ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, APRIL 17, 2019 AT 8:30 AM
MUNICIPAL BUILDING, ROOM 205, 151 MARTIN**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Gehring called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Linda Buchanan, Vice Chairwoman
Darlene Gehring, Chairwoman
Linda Peterson
Laura Schreiner
George Stern
Margaret Suter

Absent: Kevin Desmond

Administration: City Clerk Mynsberge

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of meeting minutes of March 1, 2019

MOTION: Motion by Mr. Stern, seconded by Ms. Buchanan:

To approve the minutes of March 1, 2019 as amended:

- Page 3, 2nd sentence, add "of" between "The first round" and "responses".

VOTE: Yeas, 6
 Nays, 0

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion with Lauren Wood, Department of Public Services Director
1. Tree planting

The City is in the process of finding three sugar maples to plant in the cemetery. Two will be planted in Section A by the east gate and the third will be planted south of the Martha Baldwin marker.

DPS Director Wood said:

- She would be working with City Clerk Mynsberge and Cheri Arcome of Elmwood, to come up with a long term plan for the placement and species of future trees.
- Trees are planted around the City in the spring and in the fall, and future tree plans for the Cemetery can be included in that schedule.
- The planted trees will be diverse in order to guard against pests or diseases that tend to target only one species.

- Sugar Maples grow to 40 to 45 feet. The planned trees will be 3 to 4 inches in diameter at planting. Trees with larger diameters at planting are less likely to fare well in a new location.
- J.H. Hart and Birmingham Lawn work with the City on cemetery landscape maintenance.
- It is currently uncommon for people to buy a tree for a grave. DPS' donation program allows for the donation of trees in a park setting. In the past, some people have planted trees in the cemetery without the City's knowledge.
- After a plan is in place for tree placement in the cemetery, the possibility of donating a tree to be planted in the cemetery could be added to the DPS donation literature. Street tree donations cost approximately \$700 - \$800, all inclusive.
- She will check whether the tree inventory of the cemetery includes any flowering trees.
- DPS' Park Fund currently covers all trees planted within Birmingham by the City. She said that the cemetery's Perpetual Care Fund may be able to contribute to some of those costs in the future for trees planted by the City within the cemetery, but that can be clarified going forward.

Ms. Buchanan shared historical photos of Greenwood Cemetery. She noted the treescape in the photos.

Ms. Suter said the trees will help shield people from the sun during cemetery tours.

Chairwoman Gehringer suggested that smaller flowering trees could be planted in spaces too narrow for larger trees.

The Board thanked DPS Director Wood.

- B. Presentation, Testing Engineers & Consultants, Inc.
 - 1. GPR: Process, findings, and deliverable results

The contractor was not able to attend the meeting. City Clerk Mynsberge indicated that she would try to reschedule the presentation.

- C. Discussion of cemetery website
City Clerk Mynsberge presented the item.

Ms. Suter said that as much information as possible should be provided on the City's website instead of on the Elmwood website so that the City retains the ability to better organize cemetery information.

~~Ms. Buchanan~~ Ms. Peterson¹ said she would look into who wrote the obituaries on the website and that she would then work with that person to fill in more information.

Chairwoman Gehringer recommended asking Elmwood to update the Markers and Memorials page information with correct information about where above ground monuments are not permitted. She also noted that more than 50% of cemeteries do not repair or clean historic markers.

¹ As corrected on June 7, 2019.

City Clerk Mynsberge said she would like to have BS&A in for a Summer 2019 meeting to explain what the system offers in terms of digitally keeping and organizing cemetery records.

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. 2018 Annual Report

Mr. Stern asked that the Ending Fund Balance be listed as \$700,667.51 and not \$700.667.51 on page 9.

MOTION: Moved by Ms. Buchanan, seconded by Mr. Stern:

To approve the 2018 GCAB Annual Report and to submit it to the City Commission in accordance with Chapter 34, Section 34-30 of the Birmingham Code of Ordinances.

Mr. Stern said the Board would need to discuss ~~their~~ a² recommendation to the Commission given that the cemetery has likely reached the threshold of 200 of the new plots in Sections B and C being sold.

City Clerk Mynsberge asked if it would help if she determined how much money will be needed in the Perpetual Care Fund to provide for ongoing maintenance once the cemetery is sold out.

Mr. Stern said that would be an excellent metric for making the recommendation, and that promoting sales with an eye towards the cemetery's financial goals would also be worthwhile. He suggested that City Clerk Mynsberge would likely also encounter additional plots available during her assessment.

Ms. Suter said she wanted to preserve some plots for generations to come and was not in favor of doing a marketing push now.

Ms. Schreiner said it was a balancing act between selling further plots and maintaining some available plots for the future.

Chairwoman Gehringer noted that the City Commission had previously voted against expanding the cemetery.

Ms. Buchanan noted that public cemeteries usually do not market plots, while private ones do.

VOTE: Yeas, 6
 Nays, 0

City Clerk Mynsberge stated that the Annual Report would be on the April 22, 2018 Commission agenda.

B. Prioritization of Remaining Master Plan/Collaborative Preservation Projects

City Clerk Mynsberge will resend the priority list and compile it for the June 2019 meeting.

² As corrected on June 7, 2019.

VI. FINANCIAL REPORT

A. 4Q 2018 Financial Report for Greenwood Cemetery

Mr. Stern asked that the City begin with Section H in the process of digitizing the records in order to determine whether there are any plots left.

Chairwoman Gehringer asked that the past due accounts be annotated as past due on the third page of the report.

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

None.

VIII. BOARD COMMENTS

City Clerk Mynsberge summarized the issue raised with the City Commission by Birmingham resident Michael Schneider regarding flush markers and monuments in Section F. The City Commission would like the Board to review the rules and regulations for Section F North to determine whether monuments should be allowed.

Ms. ~~Suter~~ Schreiner³ noted that these issues were discussed in public meetings. She suggested the City publicize future cemetery-relevant public meetings both at the cemetery and on the City's cemetery website in order to ensure that concerned parties are better informed. She also added that plot owners may permit non-plot owners to be buried in their plots, meaning that not everyone buried in the cemetery necessarily owns the plot they are buried in.

Mr. Stern said Section F North is 36 lots with 240 plots by his counting. He believes that 169 of those plots are occupied, 75 of those plots are unoccupied, two of the unoccupied plots cannot be used because of trees, and that the City retains ownership of five unsold lots at this time. He provided his perspective on the history of flat markers in cemeteries and their specific use in Birmingham, which he presented as ~~a maintenance consideration~~ an equality issue⁴.

Ms. Suter stated that Section F North was sold as requiring flat markers, and that it should have been left the way it was. She recommended leaving Mr. Robertson's single monument in Section F North as an exception, and otherwise returning to flat markers in the section.

Chairwoman Gehringer noted that:

- Mr. Robertson's original hearing with the Board described the monument as being much different than it turned out.
- The entire Board voted against allowing monuments in Section F North, but because they were unable to supply the Commission with an external reason for maintaining only flush markers, the Commission voted to allow monuments in the section.

~~Ms. Schreiner noted that~~⁵

- Mr. Stern had the letter describing the intended monument's appearance. She said that if the installed monument varies significantly from the proposed monument, the City could consider requiring that the monument be reverted to what was described. She stated that

³ As corrected on June 7, 2019.

⁴ As corrected on June 7, 2019.

⁵ As corrected on June 7, 2019.

while this is not the current discussion the City should enforce what was agreed upon per the letter.

City Clerk Mynsberge said she would look into the difference between the monument-as-proposed and the monument-as-installed. She said there may have been revisions submitted to the City beyond the ones provided to the Board at the time, and that she would bring all relevant information to the June 2019 meeting.

Ms. Schreiner said that, in the past, there had been speculation that the ground in the northernmost part of Section F North would have difficulty supporting the weight of heavier markers. She also noted that there was a possibility that the City was in breach of contract if the plots in Section F North were explicitly sold as being within a flush marker section, but that she was not sure if those restrictive easements apply in cemeteries.

Ms. Buchanan noted that excavated dirt from another site in Birmingham had been added to the cemetery where Ms. Schreiner was describing, and that may have been the reason for only allowing flush markers in that area.

Ms. Schreiner clarified that even without the possible historical reason for installing flush markers, there may be some contract issues with the monument's installation. She also said her understanding was that no graves were located in the excavated dirt, but that the most northerly graves in this section are adjacent to less stable ground.

Mr. Stern suggested that, since this was a private sale, Mr. Robertson may not have known to even consider whether he would be able to install his desired marker or not in the location of purchase. Mr. Stern said it may have been that Mr. Robertson did not know that restrictions on markers in cemeteries existed, as opposed to a case where Mr. Robertson knew different cemeteries have different marker requirements and neglected to do due diligence.

Ms. Buchanan recalled that Mr. Robertson said he did not read the details of the plot's location and requirements until his wife passed.

Ms. Schreiner said speculating about Mr. Robertson's knowledge regarding his plot would not influence the current situation. She said the focus of the Board should be whether the exception granted to Mr. Robertson by the City matches what was ultimately installed. She said the Board should wait for the outcome of City Clerk Mynsberge's research on the matter in order to determine next steps.

IX. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 9:57 a.m.

NEXT MEETING: JUNE 7, 2019

Greenwood Cemetery Advisory Board:

The powers and duties of the Greenwood Cemetery Advisory Board is to provide the following recommendations to the City Commission:

- 1. Modifications: As to modifications of the rules and regulations governing Greenwood Cemetery.*
- 2. Capital Improvements: As to what capital improvements should be made to the cemetery.*

3. Future Demands: *As to how to respond to future demands for cemetery services.*
Section 34-30 (g) of the Birmingham City Code

NOTICE: Individuals requiring accommodations, such as mobility, visual, hearing, interpreter or other assistance, for effective participation in this meeting should contact the City Clerk's Office at (248) 530-1880 (voice), or (248) 644-5115 (TDD) at least one day in advance to request mobility, visual, hearing or other assistance.

Las personas que requieren alojamiento, tales como servicios de interpretación, la participación efectiva en esta reunión deben ponerse en contacto con la Oficina del Secretario Municipal al (248) 530-1880 por lo menos el día antes de la reunión pública. (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964).