

**GREENWOOD CEMETERY ADVISORY BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES  
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2019 AT 8:30 AM  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING, ROOM 205, 151 MARTIN**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Vice Chairperson Linda Buchanan called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Present: Linda Buchanan, Vice Chairperson  
Kevin Desmond  
Laura Schreiner  
George Stern  
Margaret Suter

Absent: Darlene Gehringer  
Linda Peterson

Administration: Assistant City Manager Gunter, Acting City Clerk Arft, Assistant to City Manager Gallagher

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES & INTRODUCTIONS**

**A. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES OF AUGUST 16, 2019**

**Recusals:** Kevin Desmond Due to absence  
George Stern Due to absence

Mr. Stern corrected: Page 1, 2nd Bullet: Genringer's should be Gehringer's  
Page 4, 2nd Bullet: Spelling from Ms. Shreiner to Ms. Schreiner  
Page 4, Item A6: Update Greenwood should read Update Greenwood Biographical Information for existing tour program, interactive map and online access.  
Page 4, Item A7: Change from Alternate Sources of Revenue to Additional Sources of Revenue.  
Ms. Suter amended: Page 4, 4th Bullet: Replace Commissioner Hoff commented with Commissioner Hoff commented at the July 8, 2019 Commission Meeting, that.

**MOTION:** Motion by Laura Schreiner, seconded by Margaret Suter:  
To approve the minutes of August 16, 2019 as amended:

**VOTE:** Will take place at the next regular meeting of the GCAB on November 8, 2019, quorum not available for a vote due to absences.

## **B. INTRODUCTIONS**

Tiffany Gunter, Assistant City Manager, introduced herself and explained that due to Cherilynn Mynsberge's resignation, she was asked to step in to facilitate the meetings of this board. Cheryl Arft is the acting City Clerk and Ms. Gunter will be supporting Ms. Arft's previous role as Deputy City Clerk. She also announced that the City received notice that Elmwood Cemetery would be terminating their contract.

James Gallagher, Assistant to the City Manager, is working to develop a new contract for the services currently performed by the existing Elmwood contract. He went on to say that, he is presenting a scope of work for a RFP and asked for the GCAB's input to ensure that the request is complete.

<b>IV. NEW BUSINESS</b>
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### **A. REVIEW OF SCOPE OF WORK FOR RFP FOR GREENWOOD CEMETERY MANAGEMENT SERVICES**

Assistant City Manager Gunter and Assistant to City Manager Gallaher presented this item.

- Discussion of Elmwood's termination letter, which did not share any specific reason(s) for terminating.
- Mr. Stern commented that he would like the City to reexamine the collection of funds by the contractor. He expressed that he was always told that it is not permissible in the State of Michigan for someone other than the City to collect the funds. Mr. Stern further stated that he would like the issue to be researched; he was sure that in general, contractors are not allowed to collect funds as Greenwood has done.
- Mr. Stern spoke about his background that included a MBA from Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration and added that he wrote an article on Auditing Practices for the Harvard Business Review. Based on his accomplishments he went on to say he would like to see the administration comply with good auditing practices.
- Mr. Stern continued by generally commenting to the City that this is a standard make or buy decision and recommended that the City think seriously about this matter. His thoughts are to have the City collect data to support an appropriate business decision at the relevant time.
- Ms. Schreiner expressed that she was sorry to learn about Elmwood's decision to terminate. She went on to share comments from some of her clients that Elmwood has done a great job to date.
- Ms. Schreiner noted that Ms. Arcome spends a lot of time with families; she went on to say that, she feels the City Commission is not aware of how much time it takes to handle these transactions and wished for a compromise. She commented that the RFP does not include the level of detail that it has in the past and questions what the City is looking for in a new contract. Additionally she summarized that there were bumps in the road with the current contract but overall the feedback from the community and her family personally, has been positive. She hopes that Elmwood knows how much their services have been appreciated and hopes that something could be worked out in the long term.
- Ms. Gunter iterated that the RFP does not preclude Elmwood from bidding on the scope of services being discussed today.

- Mr. Desmond echoed Ms. Schreiner's comments about losing Elmwood as a contractor. He discussed experiences that his business had arranging committals and services at other City owned cemeteries. The arrangement relationship was very similar to what Elmwood and Birmingham had contractually and that the practices in Birmingham are not unusual. Mr. Desmond went further to say that, in the future, the City should continue with the priority of having a professional contractor with cemetery experience to manage the cemetery. Prior to the City contracting services to Elmwood, numerous conflicts resulted in securing an outside contractor. He expressed his fears in turning the operation over to someone who was less than professional managing the cemetery specifically because there are active plots for sale. Having a professional manage the cemetery is vital in order to serve the community in a way that meets or exceeds expectations.
- Ms. Suter agreed with Mr. Desmond. She noted that Ms. Arcome is very professional. Her concerns with the current contractor revolved around the lack of information provided to the GCAB including delays in financial reporting. She suggested that the City be very specific about timeliness of reporting and attendance at the GCAB meetings in the RFP.
- Ms. Buchanan expressed surprise and disappointment with the announcement of Elmwood's termination. She wished that Elmwood would have stated a reason or given feedback. She noted that when bidding on the contract, Elmwood was very persistent and expressive and demonstrated that they really wanted the contract. Ms. Buchanan felt as a board that they appreciated Elmwood and hoped that they felt appreciated.
- Ms. Schreiner expressed while the GCAB was not aware of any reasons for Elmwood's termination, someone at the city may have had discussions and are aware of the reasons. She stated that it is her presumption that there had been discussions back and forth over time. Judging from the meeting minutes, there were many negative board meetings where Elmwood was trashed for their performance. She went on to say that, Ms. Arcome is not just a salesperson; she is highly credentialed and specialized in the field, as is Elmwood. Ms. Schreiner also reminded the board and City that this business is a 24/7 operation and a cost is attached to this level of service. Setting the pricing on the RFP as per occurrence might have been short sighted.
- Ms. Buchanan disagreed with the comments Elmwood had been trashed in prior board meetings.
- Mr. Desmond replied that there were times before Ms. Buchanan joined the board that the meetings were quite contentious and that is why Ms. Arcome stop attending.
- Ms. Suter suggested that looking ahead to future GCAB meetings, move the information from the provider section of the meetings to the beginning of the agenda.
- Ms. Schreiner suggested including in the new contract attendance at GCAB meetings quarterly.
- Ms. Gunter said that Mr. Gallagher researched the market and found three or four providers that would be potentially interested in this scope of work.
- Ms. Buchanan asked if the RFP had been sent out for bid.
- Ms. Gunter replied that it had not and that the administration was seeking GCAB input so that it could be released next Friday.
- Ms. Suter agreed that the City should look at all aspects of the contract to make sure that the cemetery would sustain itself. She also included that fees must be charged for the plots to support the perpetual care fund.
- Mr. Desmond agreed.

Assistant City Manager Gunter summarized the scope of work, beginning at the end:

- Maintenance of grounds would be returned to DPS.
- The City Clerk's office and not the service provider would hold records.
- Fee structure explanation, preplanning, grave sales, and burial services would be the responsibility of the service provider.

Assistant to the City Manager Gallagher detailed the RFP:

- Responsibility for financials.
- Obtain death certificate, deeds, etc. and forward to the City in a timely manner.
- Customer Service and Marketing
  - Handle all calls, meetings, and communications.
  - Work with funeral directors.
- Report monthly on Key Performance Indicators.
- Cemetery Operations
- Sexton Services

Mr. Desmond commented as a point of reference that the provider would not obtain death certificates; they would obtain burial transit permits.

Ms. Schreiner expressed that she thought Elmwood maintained records and that everything had been transmitted to the City, and there are permanent records. She went on to ask how the administrations defined family.

Mr. Gallagher thought it was difficult to define but felt they could try to further define it.

Ms. Gunter expressed that family was an elusive term. She went on to say that, she did not want to call it the payee, due to the cold nature of the term and its inappropriateness.

Mr. Desmond suggested the use of more specific terms such as next of kin, but sometimes the legal next of kin are not making the arrangements. Ms. Schreiner noted that it is the funeral representative designee under statute; if not in place by default, intestacy law prevails.

Ms. Schreiner reminded everyone that often there are multiple members of the family attending these meetings whether it is pre-need planning or at-need planning. With that said, she had an issue with the RFP pricing being based on occurrences. For example, if more than one family member makes a purchase, would that be considered one occurrence since it was done in the same meeting? She also felt that it lends itself to foster abuse.

Mr. Desmond asked if Ms. Schreiner was thinking of a straight fee based on occurrences and why not consider a percentage of sales for burial services.

Ms. Schreiner asked had the market research performed found flat monthly fees charged for comparable services.

Mr. Gallagher explained that he was unable to find a complete body of work relative to the public sector as to how prices are structured. When polling private companies, he found them to be more resistant to providing pricing information.

Mr. Desmond asked Mr. Gallagher if he had spoken with representatives from Troy, Franklin, or West Bloomfield. He said that he spoke with Franklin but price was not in the initial discussion and Franklin had not followed up with Mr. Gallagher on price.

Ms. Buchanan asked if the City was thinking of having the same monetary structure as Elmwood, which was based on a percentage of grave/plot sales. GCAB was critical of Elmwood's decision to implement installment plans without board approval. She asked would the current monetary structure stay and would the existing payment plans be honored. She also asked would maintaining and cleaning stones and markers as well as interment fees be included in this RFP. If so, who would benefit from the fees?

Ms. Schreiner was excused at 9:30 am.

Mr. Gallagher reiterated that pricing would be per occurrence.

Mr. Stern did not think the City should be deciding the providers' fee structure. He suggested that the City put out the RFP and if the fee structure is not desirable, negotiations should begin.

Ms. Gunter explained that the challenge in not providing a price structure would disable the administration in terms of appropriately comparing proposals. A cross structure is more desirable by the administration to compare line item by line item.

Mr. Gallagher explained the fee structure:

- The City would receive 100% of sales.
- Service provider would bill the City for services rendered.
- Assistant to the City Manager Gallagher explained that the proposed cost structure would provide tighter controls, be more efficient, and ultimately prove to be more equitable.

Mr. Stern suggested that pricing differentiate between cremation and full body burial. Also, include cost of providing foundations and other ancillary services in the RFP. He is not concerned about the ability to compare; he just wants the RFP to be complete. Mr. Stern also asked about the City's plan in terms of insurance minimums. He continued to ask about the provider maintaining the cemetery and the implications to potential bidders. He also and what the organizational structure would look like.

Ms. Gunter explained that the potential provider would have an obligation to bring the Sexton on to the cemetery grounds so they must maintain the existing standards in respect to burials.

DPS would seed plots and new graves.

Mr. Gallagher explained that this is just one piece of the RFP and is not the full scope of work.

Ms. Gunter asked for additional feedback on the distinction between per occurrences and percentage of sales, as a preference issue.

Mr. Desmond distinguished that he raised the distinction primarily as a point of discussion.

Mr. Stern expressed that percentage of sales would be ridiculous for this venture.

Ms. Buchanan suggested that the administration look at municipal cemeteries v. private cemeteries that are using a management company as a guide.

Mr. Desmond suggested the administration use Pine Lake, W. Bloomfield, Franklin, Van Hoosen - Rochester, and Troy as comparisons because they are managed by contractors and are municipal owned.

Ms. Gunter explained, regarding previous comments on internal controls and auditing procedures, there is a bit of exposure in doing per occurrence. It is a measurable item that can be reviewed and could potentially save the City money in terms of only paying for services that are finalized. She reiterated that she must put out a format for the bidders to respond to; therefore, the RFP must have a fee structure.

- The RFP would be released on Friday, October 11, 2019.
- GCAB will review proposals and develop a recommendation for the November 18, 2019 City Commission meeting at the November 8, 2019 meeting.
- Interviews with service providers would be arranged if requested by the GCAB.
- Consider negotiating a short-term engagement with Elmwood.

#### **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. Review of Annual Report, FYE June 30, 2019.
- Mr. Stern did not know if the number of burials of the last fiscal year were included in the Annual Report to the City Commission.
  - He would like to see the total number of burials as well as total sales be reflected in the Annual Report.
- B. Other items were tabled for the November 8, 2019 meeting.

#### **VI. FINANCIAL REPORT**

- A. 4Q FY 2018-2019 Financial Report for Greenwood Cemetery

#### **II. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC FOR MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA**

#### **VIII. BOARD COMMENTS**

Ms. Buchanan felt that honesty and transparency between the GCAB, City Commission, and City Administration is important. She would like to see the GCAB included in all matters related to the cemetery.

Mr. Stern expressed that he was sorry that Ms. Mynsberge left as quickly as she did. He would have liked to thank her for the kindness she displayed in assisting him with the inventory of plots at Greenwood Cemetery. Ms. Mynsberge was a professional and able to get the agenda out to board members earlier in the week. Again, he wished that he could have thanked her for her kindness and courtesies.

Ms. Gunter passed on to the GCAB that Ms. Mynsberge is still providing advice and support to the administration even in her absence.

Ms. Buchanan extended thanks on behalf of the GCAB to Ms. Mynsberge for her services.

**IX. ADJOURN**

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

**NEXT MEETING: November 8, 2019**

Cheryl Arft, Acting City Clerk  
/vc