

**GREENWOOD CEMETERY ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2019 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 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL

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

Absent: None

Administration: Assistant City Manager Gunter, Assistant to City Manager Gallagher,
and Carrie Laird, Parks and Recreation Manager

III. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF AUGUST 16, 2019

MOTION: Motion by Ms. Buchanan, seconded by Ms. Peterson
To approve meeting minutes of August 16, 2019 as amended.

VOTE: Ayes, 7
Nays, 0
Absent, 0

B. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 4, 2019

- Mr. Stern – Page 1, Item A, should read Ms. Schreiner
- Mr. Stern - Page 5, last sentence, should read ask as opposed to and.

MOTION: Motion by Mr. Stern, seconded by Ms. Buchanan
To approve meeting minutes of October 4, 2019 as corrected.

VOTE: Ayes, 7
Nays, 0
Absent, 0

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. GREENWOOD CEMETERY MANAGEMENT SERVICES: CONTRACT

AMENDMENT – ACTION

Assistant City Manager Gunter presented this item.

1. At the October 4 meeting, a letter was presented with Elmwood's desire to terminate the existing contract with the City of Birmingham for services at Greenwood Cemetery effective November 30, 2019.
2. Staff began working on a request for proposal to find a service provider to fill that space.
3. The RFP was put out to bid and the City did not receive any proposals to consider.
4. Elmwood proposed some contract amendments to continue the existing agreement; the City staff preliminarily agreed to the amendments pending presentation to the GCAB:
 - a) Replace requirement to attend every GCAB meetings with only a requirement to attend for new initiatives being proposed.
 - b) Increase in burial fees from \$1200 to \$1400 full casket burial. There would be no increase in cremation fees. The increase would cover cost of living increases for employees.
 - c) Eliminating reporting requirements. Clerk's office would take on the reporting responsibility.
 - d) Eliminate snow removal.

Mr. Stern expressed the following:

1. He found the reporting on this item to be an embarrassment.
2. In the past, the City have presented excellent reports including detailed analysis.
3. Estimates and good advice have been excellent.
4. This report was rushed and not to the City's full potential, perhaps due to the election. The report lacks detail to substantiate an increase in labor cost.
5. Mr. Stern went on to say that, the contractor is receiving all of the profits and the Clerk's office and DPS are taking on all of the responsibility of the contract.
6. He would like to see DPS bring in revenues from services at Greenwood.
7. He suggested that GCAB go back to the City and request a report of the quality that the City is capable of providing.

Ms Gunter addressed Mr. Stern's concerns and pointed out that a decision on how to proceed must be made by Nov. 30, 2019.

Mr. Stern asked if staff had approached Clover Hill for help. He referenced them because they have offered to help many times in the past.

Ms. Gunter answered that they did not explore opportunities with Clover Hill, because the City would not be able to rely on them to provide services due to the lack of contractual obligation between the City and Clover Hill Cemetery.

Ms. Schreiner asked if we have assurances that Elmwood would continue the contract if the amendments are agreed upon. Ms. Gunter affirmed.

Ms. Schreiner expressed concerns about bullet point number one in reference to attendance at the GCAB meetings. She pointed out that the meetings should be properly noticed with 48 or 72 hours and that there be a true new item on the agenda. Due to the nature of Elmwood's business, there should be an excused absence option.

Ms. Gehringer noted that on the initial contract, it specified that a representative must attend meetings once a year at a minimal. She did not feel that the specification was an unreasonable

request. She also asked who would provide financial information, specifically sales data.

Ms. Gunter said that Elmwood would continue to provide the reporting.

Mr. Desmond felt that the increased burial fees were reasonable, customary, and fair. He added that in viewing this as a "make or buy" situation, from what we already heard. To "make" this requires cost, time and energy; and the commitment has been vastly underestimated. It is much more than what the City believes it to be in terms of properly managing a cemetery.

Ms. Schreiner agrees with Mr. Desmond that the time and energy required to manage a cemetery is underestimated.

Ms. Peterson asked how the City reacted to paying lawn care instead of Elmwood.

Ms. Gunter felt that lawn care would go back to in-house and it would only be a change in the payer.

Ms. Buchanan asked when this item would go before the Commission. Ms. Gunter replied that it would be at the November 25, 2019 meeting.

Ms. Buchanan commented that due to the commissioners being known for pondering, asked if the outcome of the November 25 meeting results in more pondering, how would the cemetery be managed going forward.

Ms. Gunter replied that there would be a disruption in service.

Ms. Peterson asked why not present on November 11, 2019. Ms. Gunter replied that the agenda would be full due to the swearing-in ceremony and induction of the new commission members.

It was also noted that Elmwood is not willing to work month to month until a solution is found. They will not work through the winter without an opportunity to recoup revenue in the spring/summer.

Ms. Gehring commented that she believes that the increased burial fee is reasonable and fair.

Mr. Stern believes that the commission would require more detail before moving Elmwood's contract forward.

Ms. Buchanan commented that there should be more financial detail including estimated cost. In addition, sales at Greenwood should be considered as a cause for Elmwood wanting to terminate their contract. Cemetery costs are increasing.

Linda Peterson expressed that creating 500 graves at Greenwood allowed Elmwood to increase revenues for a period.

Ms. Gehring admitted that when Elmwood was first contracted, she had mixed emotion; but after working with them she was able to appreciate the services provided.. She further said that the GCAB should be prepared for the City assuming management of the cemetery due to the uncertainty of the future.

Mr. Stern felt that if the commission goes along with this option, the GCAB should have a plan B with detailed financials to fulfill the board's obligation to the City.

Ms. Buchanan said that GCAB should not make a value judgement, but vote, and recommend submission of the revised proposal to the commission for approval.

Ms. Laird spoke for the responsibility of DPS in terms of maintaining cemetery grounds. She said that DPS is not prepared to take over cemetery operations. She said that she has very capable staff, backhoe operators, and would need additional full time employees.

Ms. Gehringer addressed the \$16,500 of this proposal that comes out of the GCAB budget. She noted that it is not enough in the budget to sustain the proposed payments.

Ms. Schreiner suggested that the board work on alternate revenue sources to support the cost of lawn maintenance.

Finance Director Gerber said that prior to the perpetual care fund, the cemetery was part of the property maintenance of the City. Once the perpetual care fund was established, it was hoped that Elmwood would provide the service after a period. In the meantime, the fund would grow, and support the maintenance of the cemetery going into the future. While there is enough revenue to cover the expense now, depending on interest rates in the future, it may not generate enough to pay for lawn care at \$16,500 annually.

MOTION: Motion by Ms. Buchanan, seconded by Mr. Desmond
To submit a resolution approving the Greenwood Cemetery Management Services Contract Amendment.

VOTE:	Ayes,	7
	Nays,	0
	Absent,	0

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.

VI. FINANCIAL REPORT

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

VIII. BOARD COMMENTS

Ms. Gehringer asked about the status of the ground penetrating RFP.
Ms. Gunter said that it is on hold for the time being.

IX. ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.



MEMORANDUM

Office of the City Manager

DATE: November 25, 2019

TO: Greenwood Cemetery Advisory Board

FROM: Tiffany J. Gunter, Assistant City Manager

SUBJECT: Greenwood Cemetery – Status Update

At the City Commission meeting held November 25, 2019, the decision was made to proceed with an agreement between the City of Birmingham and Creative Collaborations, LLC that is owned and operated by Ms. Cheri Arcome. The agreement is for a term of six months to allow time for the City to work with the Advisory Board to decide the best path forward for long-term cemetery operations.

Ms. Arcome has worked over the past week to ensure a smooth and complete transition is made from Elmwood to the City and to Creative Collaborations, LLC. There has been no disruption in service or quality for Greenwood Cemetery.

The financial transactions to transfer funds to the City of Birmingham account has not been finalized at the time this memo was authored, but is in process. A report detailing this transaction will be provided for the next scheduled meeting.



MEMORANDUM

Office of the City Manager

DATE: November 25, 2019

TO: Greenwood Cemetery Advisory Board

FROM: Tiffany J. Gunter, Assistant City Manager

SUBJECT: Greenwood Cemetery – Database Development

A first and most critical step for the City Administration is to organize the records into an easily searchable database that can eventually be published for public consumption on the City's website.

The City's GIS team will begin working this month, with Creative Collaborations, LLC to develop a Geographic Information System (GIS) layer that corresponds to the cemetery records held by the City. The development of this mapping of the cemetery will take several weeks to complete (roughly 6-8 weeks).

As the GIS team works to develop this tool, the Advisory Board is being asked to help identify the fields that should be included in the database. Additionally, we are seeking input on what fields should be made public versus those that should be protected. A few fields that we believe are necessary include:

- Date of Birth
- Date Deceased
- Parcel Information (location in cemetery)
- Biography
- Historical Significance
- Funeral Home
- Contact Information (i.e. surviving family member(s))
 - Address
 - Phone Number

Please provide additional fields that may be included. Keep in mind that all fields do not need to be populated for each record, but having a comprehensive range of fields at the outset of this database development will be helpful in populating it with as much information as possible.