

Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: April 18, 2024

Commissioners Present: Martha Dallas, Nancy Kirby, Alexandra Millar, Mary Wesley (Jennifer Diaz not present)

Staff Present: Cindi Wight, Steve Bachand, Holli Bushnell

Meeting was called to order 4:40pm at by Vice-Chair Alexandra Millar

I. Approval of Agenda

Millar moved to adopt the agenda, Mary Wesley seconded, all were in favor

II. Approval of minutes from 1/18/2023

Millar moved to approve the minutes, Wesley seconded, all were in favor

III. Public Forum

Public forum was opened at 4:42pm. As no members of the public were present or wished to speak public forum was also closed at 4:42pm.

IV. Approval of use of Perpetual Care funds for FY25

Cindi Wight explained that, each year, the city allocates a minimum of \$10,000 from the perpetual care fund interest towards the upkeep of Greenmount and Elmwood Cemeteries. This year the city has budgeted \$20,000 with a possible additional \$5000 to pay for seasonal staff. Wight is asking the commission to pre-approve the allocation of these funds. Wight added that she would love to have a commissioner take on the management of the perpetual care fund with the clerk/treasurer's office.

Millar asked Wight to confirm that the amount of budgeted funds increased from \$10,000 to \$20,000 during the Covid-19 lockdown and budget crisis. Wight confirmed this was the case, adding that the increase was also intended to better meet a living wage for seasonal employees. Martha Dallas asked for details on the value of the fund as a whole and information on why we're removing these funds. Wight stated that the full fund has a little more than one million dollars and that the spending of interest funds is for the upkeep of our cemeteries that are closed to new lot sales and burials. Wight also shared information on the full budget, where funds are being spent and where those moneys come from which further aided in the understanding of the use of the perpetual care interest funds. The largest expenditures are for staffing.



Dallas was supportive of the move and asked if it's fair to assume the revenue from the fund will increase as time goes on. Wight confirmed that this is the hope, however a steward is needed to make sure the fund is earning as much as possible. That said, the city will not need to access the principal of the account for many years to come. Dallas asked if the caretaker needs to be a commissioner, and Wight shared that it did not necessarily need to be. Commissioners could take on the management of the care fund as a special project and seek a volunteer to help manage the fund. Dallas questioned that the fund wasn't already being well managed by the clerk/treasurer's office and Wight shared that, while the perpetual care fund is critical for maintaining the cemeteries in the future, in the grand scheme of the city's full investments it's a drop in the bucket. Nancy Kirby commented that she might know someone but worried this person might have a conflict of interest. Wight suggested dedicating time at a future meeting to further discussion of a caretaker or steward of the perpetual care fund. Dallas asked when the fund was started and Holli Bushnell was able to share that it is at least 100 years old, but likely began 20 to 40 years after Lakeview opened.

Millar asked if there was any further discussion needed on the perpetual care fund before the commission voted. Seeing none, she asked for a movement.

Dallas moved to approve the proposed use of perpetual care fund interest in the FY25 budget. Millar seconded, all were in favor.

V. Meeting Schedule

Wight brought up the meeting schedule to see if commissioners felt the need to keep a monthly meeting date reserved or if they would rather space it out to once every two months or some other configuration. She noted that commissioners have felt frustration when monthly meetings have been canceled even though the commission mandate is to meet a minimum of 4 times yearly.

Millar shared that she likes having a monthly date set aside for meetings and does not have a problem with canceling those meetings if needed. She explained that the two main reasons for cancelling meetings is that there are not topics for an agenda or that open meeting laws can't be met for one reason or another. Bushnell noted that agenda topics need to be provided to her in the first week of the month in order to post the agenda with plenty of time to spare.

After some back and forth as to whether the commission would meet every other month or continue to meet on the 3rd Thursday of every month with the option for cancellation the commission ultimately decided to continue meeting on the 3rd Thursday with a cancellation option. They will continue to refrain from meeting in July, August, and December.

Commissioners will provide discussion topics to Chair Diaz (CC'ing office assistant Bushnell) in the first week of the month, then those topics will be shared to Bushnell and she will create the agenda and schedule the meeting through the city's internal system. Bushnell will communicate with the commission as to details of the meeting and whether there are enough topics to



warrant one. Dallas noted that this change will be helpful for members of the public who wish to sit in on meetings or make comments.

VI. Staff Updates

Steve Bachand reported that American Flags for veteran's graves have been purchased and that construction continues on both the office building and the chapel. Seasonal employee Jason Howard has returned for another year and has already begun work. Additional seasonal staff has also been hired and are ready to begin once the season is in full swing. Bachand praised the whole staff team at the cemetery for their hard work and shared that the current focus is on grounds maintenance.

Wight shared that the city is re-bidding the RFP for section 8 due to clarity issues in the original RFP. This version of the plan will incorporate green burial options for both Muslims and non-Muslims seeking that option. Both Millar and Dallas requested a refresher presentation on the status of section 8 at a future meeting. Millar particularly was concerned about the ordinance change that would be needed to allow green burials in the city. Bachand explained that the current thinking is that the ordinance could be lifted specifically for this section without opening the entire cemetery up for green burials (which is not a possibility). Millar felt this would be a topic for an entire meeting on its own and Bachand assured her that the green burial discussion will likely require many meetings. The desire for green burial is so high that the city may need to look at opening a space that is specifically dedicated to it. People from everyone, particularly Muslims, are looking to Lakeview for green burial options and we just don't have the space to accommodate as many as are requested.

Dallas requested that green burial be the main focus for the next meeting and the rest of the commission was in agreement.

VII. Commissioner Updates

Dallas asked about the status of the proposed commission retreat now that our previous facilitator is the Mayor of the city of Burlington. Wight felt that a retreat would be most appropriate after the summer break as there are not funds available in the FY24 budget but there will be some in the FY25 budget. An organizational retreat is proposed for the September meeting while commissioners will discuss goals at the next meeting.

Wesley asked about future work with VOCA. Bachand shared that VOCA was disappointed in the turn out for the Elmwood work day in 2023 and that they feel their organization is primarily to support rural cemeteries with no other support. VOCA is more than welcome to return to for a project at a Burlington city cemetery, but they may choose not to. If they do come back, Bachand suggested that all commissioners attend the work day and make sure the event is well publicized. Dallas asked if working with VOCA is worthwhile and Bachand confirmed that they are extremely helpful in terms of their ability to coordinate and train volunteers. Wesley



suggested a further discussion of volunteer initiatives in general – citing the City and Lake Semester, School athletic teams, and community organizations that have all expressed interest in stone cleaning and care. The topic of volunteers and coordination will be on a future agenda. Wight reminded Kirby that her term as commissioner is up in June. Kirby intendeds to reapply and will reach out to Lori Olberg at the clerk/treasurer’s office to do so.

Kirby asked about the storm water storage tank project in the works for the Cambrian rise development. Bushnell was able to share that it has gone back into the planning stages but will be happening at some point.

VIII. Annual Commission Report

Wight explained that this is something provided to the city council on a yearly basis that details what the commission has accomplished in the past year. Bushnell will pull previous reports and generate one for FY24 to be approved and signed at the next meeting. Topics mentioned will include the commissions ongoing efforts to address climate change and conserve native habitat and biodiversity with the grow wild partnership and native pollinator gardens amongst others.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:42pm. The next meeting will be held May 23, 2024 at 4:30pm, at a location TBD.