

Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: February 20, 2025

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

Staff Present: Holli Bushnell, Cindi Wight, Steve Bachand,

Meeting was called to order 4:39pm at by Chair Jennifer Diaz

I. Approval of Agenda

Diaz moved to adopt the agenda, Nancy Kirby moved to second, all were in favor

II. Approval of minutes from 9/19/2024

Diaz moved to approve the minutes, Nancy Kirby seconded, all were in favor

III. Public Forum

Public forum was opened at 4:40pm, as no one was present or wished to speak, public forum was also closed at 4:40pm

IV. Pricing Increase

Steve Bachand, Cemetery and Grounds Manager for BPRW, showed a presentation requesting pricing increases for lot purchases and burials. The last time was implemented in February of 2023 and was 10% at that time. That said, Inflation has increased yearly since 2023. At this point in time, Bachand was requesting a 3% increase on burials and lot sales which would be in line with cost of living adjustments (COLA). Bachand shared a table showing current pricing and what a 3% increase for both standard pricing and specialty (weekend, holiday, and winter) pricing. This increase keeps up with the cost increases the department faces every year. Bachand's plan is to increase by 3% every year in alignment with COLA instead of doing a big increase every 3 to 5 years

Kirby agreed with Bachand's plan, stating that it seems like a wise decision. If the department doesn't implement this increase and operating cost continue to go up, we won't be able to provide the level of service that's expected of us. Additionally, the cemetery operating costs already exceed their budget.



Bachand continued his presentation by presenting a possible price increase for full casket burials in general. The cemetery really needs to update and improve our current full burial equipment including burial greens, casket lowering equipment, a funeral tent, and planking to shore up full casket burial. Bachand proposed a 5 year payment plan to replace all the equipment, broken down by burial per year. If we increase the full burials cost by \$51.50 per full burial that will allow us to pay for our replacement equipment. If commission approves, Cindi will set up a reserve fund with the board of finance to make sure the funds are set aside for replacements.

Diaz felt the plan was reasonable and joked about the current state of the economy. She also likes the idea of setting up a reserve. Bachand shared that it's been years since the cemetery purchased new burial greens and that they really need replacement. He added that the cemetery has never been able to plan ahead like this before. Additionally, the new lowering devices are much easier to use than the one we currently have. While the upgrade is expensive we can break it down and add the small increase to be able to afford it.

Kirby added that there's a safety and customer service aspect to this upgrade that should be considered. We could improve both aspects of our operation with the increase. Diaz agreed that the upgrade would be more efficient and better for employees as well. Millar felt that the yearly increase would be more palatable for the public. Holli Bushnell added that the yearly increase would be easier to implement from her perspective too.

Diaz moved to approve the pricing increase proposed by Bachand. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Millar asked if the commission should vote on when the yearly increase goes into effect. Bachand stated that he would like to implement the increase as soon as possible so we can start saving towards our goal. Kirby suggested April, 1 to post new rates. April 1 would be good for her too. Diaz asked if it would be easier to continue with the same date every year or if we shift to the start of the fiscal year in 2026. Bachand asked when the new COLA will be available and Cindi Wight shared that it depends on the union contract negotiations. Wight felt that the fiscal year would be a good time to make the price change. Other changes are done by calendar year and need to be approved by BOF and CC. Diaz suggested revisit the date change next year.

Diaz moved to put pricing in effect on April 1, 2025. All were in favor.

V. Staff/Director Updates

Bushnell shared a brief update about the goings on in the office. She has completed through the lot card data entry through "Fi". It has been slower going than the burial card entry because



she has discovered a number of mistakes in what was entered into Pontem. She also shared that all graves available for purchase have been entered into Pontem. Paul Morris continues to work on GIS entry for Section 5 and Bushnell shared that the information he's able to integrate is extremely helpful for day to day operations and for historical research.

Wight shared that BPRW has put the engineering phase of Section 8 out for RFP bid as no one bid last time. Morris looked in to who did the work in Section 5 (which was of extremely high quality), and they're still in business. Bachand and Morris will be meeting 2/21/2025 at 10am with company via zoom and are hopeful they will take on the project. The work will include designing the section for us, as well as laying it out and pinning the section – the whole thing start to finish. Wight added that BPRW is hoping to get sole source approval because no one bid on the project the first time, and this will help the project move forward.

Millar recalled that a design work had already been done by a previous company. Wight explained that that work was conceptual and a final layout still needs to be completed. Also, the new design would add in a Muslim burial section that is a shift from the original design to make sure graves are aligned with the cardinal directions.

Millar added that she would like to get a Muslim section update too. Bachand shared that Lakeview has approximately 40 graves in the existing section, but even so we're running out of space pretty quickly. We have done several burials within the last few months, some of the only burials we've done in the deep of winter. Staff will be meeting March 4 with the Islamic Society to review things. Currently, staff is proposing removing the 3 Birch trees bordering the south edge of the section so we can add an additional 29 lots. We are trying to prolong the use of the current section for as long as possible. Long term, we'll reserve space in section 8 for Muslims. It is unknown how many graves will be in section 8, but there will be an Islamic area.

Wight added that we are also looking at establishing green burials in section 8. This would still require an ordinance change. We will also need to update the MOU with Islamic society. We can't find any signed copies of original MOU. Bachand added that the Islamic society wants the option of pre-sales, and that is up to them. Should they allow pre-sales the cemetery would make the stipulation that monuments couldn't be installed until after a burial has taken place.

VI. Commissioner Updates

Kirby shared that all is well at Greenmount. Only 2 vehicles have come in the last few months and they were visiting family. With the heavy snow we've had vehicles can't really go in.



Millar shared that would love to talk about the year ahead at the next commission meeting. What are the moving pieces, conversations, what's going on? Even small update on the Muslim section at this meeting was really helpful for her. She would like to do a look ahead and discuss things at the next meeting to see where she can do work and support the staff. She would love a whole meeting or part of meeting to discuss this. Wight asked if grounds staff and Bachand can put something together. Maybe Kate from Grow Wild could attend the meeting too. It could include a Section 8 and Islamic society update. Bachand confirmed he will connect with Morris and see what he's working on. Wight added that if Morris would be willing to clock in from home, the commission would love to see mapping. Diaz felt this was a great suggestion. Wight stated that commissioners should plan on March and April meetings to go over everything that was just proposed.

VII. Adjournment

Diaz moved to adjourn, Millar and Kirby seconded, and all were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 5:31pm. The next meeting will be held on 3/20/2025 at 4:30pm at the Lakeview Office.