

**CEMETERY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

February 19, 2009

5:30 P.M.

Engineering/Planning Conference Room, City Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT

Ray Geigel
Dennis Harrigan
John Zabel
Dennis Schneider
Jerry Waak

STAFF PRESENT

Derek Muench
Sandy Ronski

OTHERS

R. Geigel called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

Approval of the Minutes from December 18, 2008

J. Zabel made a motion to approve the minutes. R. Geigel seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Review of lot sales, burials, & quit claims since 2006 fee increase

S. Ronski distributed some printouts showing annual lot sales, quit claims & burials since 1994. Quit claims of lots to the City have decreased slightly. The percentage of in-ground cremation burials has now risen to 37.22%.

Update on 2009 flower quotes

D. Muench passed out a comparison of the quotes, including the one received from Honeymoon Acres. They were approximately \$2,000 more than the lowest quote, and per the Commission's instructions, the bid was awarded to Roorbach's. The owner of Honeymoon Acres has invited D. Muench to visit his business in order to discuss ways to save money on the program (reduce flower sizes, use cuttings vs. seedlings, etc.)

Chapel donation

D. Muench said the plans are going very well. He did get a sketch drawing from Hamann Construction. Because the money has been entrusted to us, we do not need to go out and get bid quotes. Due to the time constraints with this project, D. Muench and Valerie Mellon, City Engineer, would like to just go with Hamann Construction on the project. The estimate came in at \$52,000, but there are some extras that could be removed in order to bring the project down to \$30,000. *D. Schneider entered.* There is a possibility of approaching the West Foundation for a matching \$30,000 grant in order to do some additional landscaping around it, etc. Because Hamann is doing the project, D. Muench said that they may not charge us to move the columbarium. We would still need to add some cement to the existing area, which would not be included in the bid. We do have preliminary approval from the

bank based on the sketch that was submitted. By May, we need to give them a proposal and a timeline as to when construction will be completed. It doesn't need to be erected by May.

R. Geigel was concerned that this structure be easy to clean and kept free from bugs. D. Muench assured him it would be easy to clean, because there were no walls, etc. Not having it lighted would save on bugs. Employees could sweep the bugs away with a broom, and use a broom or blower to clean the cement slab.

D. Muench said that the plan would require moving the columbarium from Section X to Q. R. Geigel questioned if the columbarium couldn't just be moved further to the south in that same section. D. Muench said that would involve a substantial cost to pour another slab and sidewalks going to the columbarium. Additional slabs were already poured in section Q when the first columbarium went in, so no further concrete work would be required if the columbarium was moved there. No niches have been sold in the columbarium in X, and section X has not been laid out yet. D. Muench is in favor of laying the section out for traditional graves for humans only. R. Geigel said the recommendation on what to do with the section would come from the Cemetery Commission and then go to the Streets Committee for approval. R. Geigel does not want to give up yet on a pet section. D. Harrigan asked about using the section for cremation-only spaces for humans. He said that some people would not be in favor of having a chapel in a section with pets. D. Muench said that the only good area we have for a chapel is in section X, and he doesn't want to pass up on the donation. He thinks moving the columbarium is the best option. D. Muench said that having the columbarium in Section X for two years has been a long enough time frame to gauge the demand for the niches. There haven't been any sales or many inquiries. He thinks we should move the columbarium to section Q and build that section up to increase sales.

J. Waak questioned how the chapel would be used. D. Muench said it could be used in many different fashions, such as a quiet place to reflect. Parks generally have benches and areas to rest and reflect. A service could be held there, but without walls, there would not be much protection from inclement weather. J. Waak felt that electricity should run to the building. D. Muench would like to sell memorial benches inside or around the chapel. J. Zabel questioned if we could rent it out for events, such as weddings. S. Ronski suggested that the spaces in that section could be sold at a higher rate. People may want to be by the chapel. J. Zabel questioned if we would have humans on one side of the chapel and pets on the other.

J. Zabel said that we need to stay with the times and that we should be planning for an in-ground cremation-only section for humans. R. Geigel doesn't want to get away from a pet area. D. Harrigan suggested keeping a cremation columbarium in an area where there is in-ground cremation burials in order to give people choices. S. Ronski suggested using the area behind the Sexton House for pets instead. When the Commission had viewed the area, it was agreed that it was too noisy and close to the traffic on North 18th Street for committal services, but it may be acceptable for a pet area, since you wouldn't have clergymen, extended family and friends visiting the site. D. Schneider had laid the area out as a cremation-only section for humans when he was the Sexton, but the area was never fully developed. There are currently no burials in that area.

J. Waak questioned whether the chapel could be built over the columbariums in section Q. However, due to the minimum size requirements from the trust, it would not be feasible to do that in section Q.

J. Zabel said that people might buy in section X if they could have a bench there. J. Zabel made a motion to move the pet section behind the Sexton House, put the chapel in section X with benches, develop Section X into a cremation-only section for humans, and move the columbarium to Section Q for humans only. J. Waak seconded the motion. R. Geigel said the whole idea of the second columbarium was to promote it for pets. D. Schneider said it's not selling even though it's been two years. J. Zabel asked D. Harrigan if anyone has ever asked him about a columbarium niche for their pet, and D. Harrigan indicated that no one has. Families generally prefer to take them home. J. Zabel said that he cannot foresee the cemetery being able to sell even half of the columbarium for pets. D. Schneider agreed.

R. Geigel suggested that people might be more apt to purchase a niche for their pet if they see the columbarium up front behind the Sexton House. D. Muench said there already is a columbarium up front. R. Geigel said that it was too far back to be seen from North 18th Street. D. Muench stated there are currently bushes there.

D. Muench said that the cemetery "took a hit" from the publicity in the media regarding the columbarium for pets. D. Harrigan indicated that Knollwood has a pet section. D. Harrigan said that the mentality is that people generally want to take their cremated pets home, but the owners indicate that when they themselves die, they would like the pet's remains put with them. He has that written out in pre-arrangements. D. Muench believes that the columbarium only appeals to a small percentage of people and that the cost turns people away. D. Harrigan feels that people will consider the columbarium just to be put with their pet, but so far he doesn't know of anyone considering to just put their pet there. He said that Manitowoc is still pretty traditional.

R. Geigel indicated there was still a motion on the table (3-ayes, 1-nay (R. Geigel), 1-abstain (D. Harrigan – unsure if proper procedure to rescind previous actions regarding pets). The motion carried. J. Zabel thinks his motion has more marketability than the previous plans, and he would like to see more focus on the chapel. R. Geigel said that he would bring the Commission's decision to the Streets and Sanitation Committee, but that he was against it.

J. Zabel said that if we have one sale for a pet in the columbarium, then our plans are done. J. Zabel said that he would like to make the area behind the Sexton House for pets only. D. Schneider said it could be pets only or pets and humans. J. Zabel said that we could make one area pets and one area pets and humans up front. J. Waak said that we could keep the columbarium as pets and humans, but just move it to section Q. D. Muench said some people don't want to be buried with animals. He said that if you make the area behind the Sexton House for pets and humans, the humans who want to be buried there, won't be bothered by other pets. D. Muench said that you have to have a segregated area or other people will be upset about it.

D. Harrigan questioned whether the columbarium should be kept in section X for humans so that people could be given different options for cremations in one area. D. Muench said that the least expensive way was to move the columbarium to section Q and add onto the cement in section X for the chapel. R. Geigel requested that D. Muench get the Commission some figures as to the cost of pouring cement for the different options (adding onto cement in X, pouring a new base for the chapel, and a new base for the columbarium). D. Muench questioned where we would get the money to pour a new base for a columbarium behind the Sexton House. He's not sure the West Foundation would want to contribute money to create a pet section.

R. Geigel thinks that people may have it "in the back of their mind" to purchase a pet & human niche in the future, and if we move the columbarium to section Q, it will no longer be an option. It was stated that in-ground burials of pets and humans would still be available behind the Sexton House. D. Harrigan was asked if he had seen a pet columbarium anywhere else. He said that he has not noticed a pet columbarium anywhere else, but he hasn't really looked. J. Zabel said that he is in a lot of cemeteries, and he doesn't know of any that have pet columbariums. The only cemeteries he knows of that have pet sections are privately-owned ones. He said that the pet section at Knollwood is relatively small.

D. Schneider suggested that the motion maybe should be just to move the columbarium, only because we want to put the chapel in Section X, and that is time-sensitive. He is okay with keeping the columbarium for pets and humans for a while longer, but he went along with J. Zabel's motion, because we need the area for the chapel. We could move the columbarium to Section Q temporarily and not even sell any niches in it. R. Geigel said that he is okay with that.

Review or create & possibly vote on policies for requesting bids, etc.

S. Ronski said that we do not have any policies regarding going out for bids. The only motion that was made regarding going out for bids dealt with the inscriptions/bronze markers for the columbariums. She passed out a sheet with some general policies, but none specifically mentioned when bids would need to be gathered.

R. Geigel said that we should give everyone within a 30-mile radius a chance to bid. R. Geigel made a motion that for all purchases over \$10,000, bids should be requested from vendors within a 30-mile radius. D. Muench is questioning why we need this policy, since most items that the cemetery purchases are under \$10,000, and the ones that are over are generally capital equipment which is almost always handled through DPW and the Streets and Sanitation Committee. D. Muench said that the only thing that would fall into this category would be the perpetual care flowers. R. Geigel said that since this is a City cemetery, we need to shop local. D. Muench said that's what he wants to do. He doesn't feel we need to get bids from 30-miles away.

D. Schneider said that when he was at the cemetery, he was a working foreman and had other duties besides those in the office. If he had to spend time going to all these places to get bids, then his labor was being wasted when he could have been doing other work. You can't add on all these other duties without taking time away from the cemetery. D. Schneider thinks

that \$10,000 is a good amount. To go to 4 or 5 places for a couple of lawnmowers or to spend time showing a couple of people from different companies several lawnmowers to be traded in is not feasible.

R. Geigel rescinded his motion. R. Geigel made a motion to table the issue until the next meeting. J. Zabel seconded it. D. Harrigan and D. Schneider indicated that it wasn't a bad motion. R. Geigel wants more discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

Memorial Tree Program

D. Muench said that discussion of the Memorial Tree Program could have been effected by what we decided to do regarding going out for bids. D. Muench discussed the updates he did to the pamphlet that were requested at the previous meeting.

2009 Memorial Day plans

R. Geigel suggested discussing these plans at the next meeting, because he didn't have time to work on anything yet.

The next meeting will be Thursday, March 12th at 5:30. J. Waak made a motion to adjourn the meeting. D. Harrigan seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 6:55 P.M.

Derek Muench, Cemetery Manager