

**CEMETERY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

March 26, 2009

5:30 P.M.

Engineering/Planning Conference Room, City Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT

Ray Geigel
Fred Radandt
John Zabel
Ted Dirkman
Jerry Waak

STAFF PRESENT

Derek Muench
Sandy Ronski
Val Mellon

OTHERS

R. Geigel called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

Approval of the Minutes from February 19, 2009

T. Dirkman made a motion to approve the minutes. F. Radandt seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Chapel donation

D. Muench put together the grant application for the West Foundation requesting \$30,000 in matching funds. The City Attorney's Office is strongly recommending that the project go out for bids. V. Mellon suggested using the funds from the West Foundation to pay for architectural drawings to be developed which can be used to get bids. Otherwise, all we have is a sketch.

Originally, the Commission had discussed having a metal roof on the chapel. Jim Hamann had discussed some other options with V. Mellon which could make the chapel cheaper and might make it look more decorative, such as fish-scale type roofing which could save approximately \$5,000. The inside would still be tongue and groove cedar.

T. Dirkman suggested that to save time, we could tell the bidders that they would have a certain dollar amount to come up with an architectural plan and a building. There are companies that have architects in house. F. Radandt suggested that we request an extension from the trust fund. F. Radandt made a motion to pursue RFP's, getting alternate bids for the different types of roofing and column materials. T. Dirkman seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Pet section / columbarium placement

Tabled until the chapel issue is settled.

Bronze markers on columbariums

S. Ronski said that five niches have been sold on the side of the columbarium offering engraved inscriptions, due to the flexibility engraving offers. There has been no interest on the side with the bronze markers. T. Dirkman said that he would like to see more sales before going with just engraving. D. Muench said that all it takes is one sale on the bronze side, and then we are locked in. He would like to keep the columbarium looking uniform by going with all engraving. F. Radandt made a motion to discontinue bronze plaques but not emblems. R. Geigel seconded the motion. F. Radandt said that there may be more options for memorializing people if the chapel plans go through, such as plaques, bricks, benches, etc. Motion carried unanimously.

Pricing on columbariums

T. Dirkman believes the pricing of the columbarium niches is very reasonable. F. Radandt said that he thinks that the niches have not been marketed enough. T. Dirkman said that if people don't know about the niches, then decreasing the price will not change the amount of sales. J. Zabel said the cost of the niche package is not much different than the cost of an in-ground burial. F. Radandt suggested offering relatives of the people who have niches a deal to purchase a niche by their loved ones. He was in favor of keeping prices for the public the same. D. Muench said that there is a big profit margin on the columbariums, so we could lower the price below \$2,000 in order to increase sales. F. Radandt said that the whole reason the Commission is here is to make money for the Cemetery and as long as we are not out of line with the pricing, then we shouldn't lower the price. We are offering people another option at nearly the same price as in-ground burials.

J. Waak said that we should use some advertising to get pre-sales and giving people financing with three years no interest. People could buy it ahead of time without having to have the full amount saved up. F. Radandt said that the problem is with trying to remove the decedent's remains if they don't pay. T. Dirkman said that we won't put the cremations in the niches until they are paid. The City would have to be willing to repossess the niches if they do not get paid in full. F. Radandt said that the contract would have to read that if payments are not made, whatever they have invested in the niche would then go to the City. He said to have purchasers put a downpayment on it when they sign the contract, and if they don't pay by the end of three years, then take it back. F. Radandt said we should ask the City Attorney for suggestions.

T. Dirkman asked D. Muench to come up with something to help market the columbariums. D. Muench said that he didn't feel comfortable throwing out general ads to the public, especially in this type of economic climate. He thinks the public will feel that we are pushing "the taxpayer's cemetery." T. Dirkman said that we should put the options out there. He asked what the difference is if the times would be good right now. D. Muench said that it will be tough no matter what the economy is like. He said that he finds it hard to advertise that. F. Radandt said suggested advertising to the senior citizens. D. Muench said that he could see advertising in the senior section of the newspaper, because they aren't really going to complain about it. J. Waak said that the people we would be marketing to are the people that have excess cash. The market generally will not affect that type of person, when they are emotionally ready to purchase, they will come in. D. Muench said he would feel

comfortable doing a six month campaign in the senior section of the newspaper. F. Radandt said that he thinks the Senior Center has its own newsletter. R. Geigel suggested putting a nice picture of the cemetery or columbarium along with some information on the City's cable channel.

J. Zabel said that there are finance companies out there that buy contracts. F. Radandt said that there's no reason we can't do the financing, because people can't take the product from us. F. Radandt suggested doing a stuffer when the City's property tax bills are sent out at the end of the year. R. Geigel said people should e-mail D. Muench with any additional ideas they have. We will discuss the issue again when we have more time.

2009 Memorial Day plans

J. Waak said that he talked to Marge Miley from the Herald Times Reporter, and she will gladly help us out. He said that if we want her to do a larger story, we need to get our information to her and she will combine it with what she has in order to do a larger piece. What she wants to know is "What is a columbarium?", what direction are we taking with pets, etc. She would do a piece showing how we started from the cemetery on North 8th & Park to what the future holds. R. Geigel was thinking to focus on some of the people who are buried in the cemetery and tell some information that wouldn't be found on tombstones. He wanted to get the kids involved by having a cemetery walk.

T. Dirkman said that we should have a memorial program in the cemetery either honoring the veterans who are buried here or honoring the people who were buried in the cemetery over the past year by reading off their names. A local politician or pastor could do the program and raise the flag or blow taps. A notice should be sent to the families that the names will be read, and T. Dirkman said that the families will come. F. Radandt said that the mailing should go out about two weeks before. V. Mellon suggested having a Boy Scout Troop come and raise the flag. T. Dirkman volunteered to craft a letter inviting family members to our program. F. Radandt suggested that we have Assemblyman Ted Zigmunt as the speaker. T. Dirkman thought it would be nice if the new Mayor would make an appearance.

Policy for requesting bids, etc.

D. Muench said that he felt that we should develop a policy that we can adhere to for items that are of substantial value, other than capital equipment that is purchased through the DPW. At this time, the perpetual care flower purchase is the only item that seems to apply. T. Dirkman suggested that the policy be that we should try to get three local bids, then if the bids don't seem to be acceptable go out further. *F. Radandt left at 6:23.* R. Geigel suggested that the policy be for items over \$10,000. T. Dirkman made a motion to get three or more bids for purchases over \$10,000 or more. The preference should be given to staying local. R. Geigel seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Items for next meeting

T. Dirkman volunteered to work on the letter. D. Muench volunteered to get in touch with a speaker. R. Geigel will contact a veteran's group. J. Waak will contact Marge Miley. He would like to bring her some historical information from the cemetery files. He suggested also having D. Harrigan come as well to talk about the trend in funerals. S. Ronski stated

that in the past, the previous Cemetery Manager had thrown out the idea of giving out prayer cards or memorial items at the memorial program. T. Dirkman said that the family could then come forward and pick up the item.

The next meeting will be Thursday, April 16th at 5:00. T. Dirkman made a motion to adjourn the meeting. J. Zabel seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 6:35 P.M.

Derek Muench, Cemetery Manager