

**CEMETERY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

November 10, 2011

5:00 P.M.

Engineering/Planning Conference Room, City Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jason Sladky, Chairman
Dennis Harrigan, Vice Chair
Jerry Waak
Ted Dirkman
Dennis Schneider

STAFF PRESENT

Val Mellon
Derek Muench
Sandy Ronski
Jeff Shimek
Luke Hennessey

OTHERS

Jim Brey, Alderman
Eric Zabel

J. Sladky called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Approval of the Minutes from August 25, 2011

T. Dirkman made a motion to approve the minutes. J. Waak seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

2012 Budget & its Effect on Operations

Although the 2012 budget was not finalized at the time of the meeting, D. Muench gave an update on how the budget may affect cemetery operations, i.e. an employee may be laid off, hours reduced, and/or cemetery employees may be needed to assist more with general snow plowing of City streets, etc.

Review of Fees

T. Dirkman said that our current fees are not out of line with the other local cemeteries, but there is a distinct difference between Evergreen and Knollwood or Calvary. We have the nicest park, so we should be charging more. His recommendation was that the cost of purchasing a space should be close to \$1,000 per space. D. Harrigan said that people are cost driven. T. Dirkman reviewed some of the other fees:

- cremation-only spaces for Evergreen are \$500, Knollwood's are \$540, & Calvary only has full-size spaces for \$700;
- 2nd right of interment at Evergreen is \$150, Calvary is \$700, & Knollwood is \$450;
- administration fee at Evergreen is \$75, Calvary & Knollwood are both at \$100;
- opening & closing fee for a traditional burial at Evergreen is \$650 (T. Dirkman recommended \$950). The other competitors are at \$800 and \$830.
- opening & closing fee for an exterior niche at Evergreen is \$250 (T. Dirkman recommends \$425). The other competitors are at \$400 and \$360.
- Saturday surcharge at Evergreen is \$150 (T. Dirkman recommends \$425). The other competitors are at \$150 before 12:30 p.m. or \$450 after & \$1,070 before 12:30 p.m. or \$1,230 after 12:30 p.m. *(Note that Evergreen's \$150 surcharge would be in addition to the opening & closing fee. Some of the dollar amounts T.*

Dirkman gave for the other cemeteries are the opening & closing fee plus the Saturday surcharge.) T. Dirkman thinks that the 2-tier scale confuses people. D. Muench said that he thinks Knollwood's Saturday surcharge is \$200 before 12:00 and \$400 after. D. Muench said that if we do layoff employees, it would be difficult for us to maintain a Monday through Saturday work schedule as we have now, so Saturday service may be on a call-in basis only. We want to be sure to factor in overtime expenses. D. Muench recommends a Saturday fee of at least \$300.

D. Muench recommended raising the two different types of cremation-only spaces to the same fee. D. Harrigan said that always raising prices isn't always the answer; you could increase volume due to the beauty. D. Muench said that if we raise fees due to the beauty of the cemetery, then we have to maintain the cemetery in a fashion that the beauty will continue to sell the cemetery.

S. Ronski did a quick estimate based on the proposed revenues and said the recommended fees might generate an extra \$69,000. D. Harrigan said that our competitors raised their rates around the end of 2010. Two years ago, we had raised select fees (Saturday fees, 2nd right, and foundation fees). T. Dirkman said that there are other things that we could sell at the cemetery. D. Schneider said that people want less government involvement. They don't want the government taking business away from private enterprise. D. Schneider reminded the commission that when people purchase spaces, a portion of that cost was perpetual care of the lot. People expect that the lot will be maintained in the same manner as it was when they purchased it. D. Schneider said that he feels that people will get cremated & keep the cremains at home. He brought up the point that we have a lot of parks in the city that don't make money, and that Evergreen is similar to a park.

D. Muench asked T. Dirkman how attractive Evergreen Cemetery would be to prospective buyers, since we have no perpetual care fund. T. Dirkman said that without the perpetual care fund, it does not attract at all, because the care fund means a lot to a business. The business will work off the interest of the fund or other revenues. He said that there still businesses out there that will jump at the chance to manage a place like this. They will increase revenues by selling markers, vaults, etc. Without the care fund, he feels that you would almost have to give the cemetery away. D. Muench said that he did talk to a private group that could maintain the cemetery, but their hourly rate was not any better than our current rate.

There was a discussion regarding the use of foundations. D. Schneider said that slabs are good, because they save labor up front, but then over time, they need to be adjusted. J. Sladky made a motion to raise foundation fees to \$120 for a single and \$190 for a double, leave the traditional space at \$700, raise the cremation only space to \$600, 2nd right to \$500, administration fee to \$100, opening & closing fee for a traditional grave to \$825, opening & closing for a niche to \$425, and Saturday surcharge to \$300. D. Schneider seconded the motion to open it up for discussion. T. Dirkman recommended raising the traditional space to \$800. J. Waak recommended \$850. D. Harrigan made a motion to amend J. Sladky's motion to change the rate of a traditional size space to \$800. D. Schneider seconded the motion for the amendment.

D. Harrigan suggested charging more for opening & closing fees during the winter. He said that, in his experience, people do not complain about that. T. Dirkman amended the motion regarding fees to add a winter surcharge from December 1st to March 31st of \$150 for a traditional burial and \$75 for a cremation burial. D. Schneider seconded the motion for the amendment. J. Waak would like to see the costs the same year round; have a higher fee all year long to cover the winter expenses. T. Dirkman said that our costs are legitimately higher during winter due to snow removal, extra time digging due to frost, etc. He said that spring is probably the worst time, because melting snow makes things harder, because then you are wrecking stuff. J. Waak said that when you do it by date, you give people a reason to complain. If they have it on November 30th, they pay the lower rate, but if they wait another day or two, they have to pay considerably more.

D. Muench suggested raising the opening & closing fee for a cremation burial to \$400. Knollwood charges \$540 and Calvary charges \$500. T. Dirkman amended the motion regarding fees to increase the cremation opening & closing fee to \$500. D. Schneider seconded the motion.

S. Ronski said that doing a rough estimate, it looks like the increase in fees would generate approximately an additional \$55,000 to \$56,000. The motion regarding fees passed unanimously.

D. Harrigan said that people feel secure about the cemetery, since the City owns it. There is an element of longevity to it that the private cemeteries don't have. J. Waak feels that the quality of one of the private local cemeteries has gone down over the years.

Revisions to Rules & Regulations

T. Dirkman made a motion to approve the recommended changes to the Rules & Regulations. J. Waak seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Volunteer to Fix Old, Broken Tombstones

D. Muench explained that we have someone who is interested in repairing old tombstones for people who no longer have family to care for them. Typically, when we have vandalism or damage to stones (by falling tree limbs, etc.) now we contact the families. T. Dirkman thought it was a good idea for the volunteer to repair the tombstones, but suggested asking the other monument dealers about the product that he was using. J. Sladky recommended checking with the City Attorney before proceeding. T. Dirkman reminded the commission that the cemetery does not own the gravestones; they belong to the families.

New ideas (green burials, cenotaph, ossuary, etc.)

Tabled until the next meeting.

The next meeting will be Thursday, March 22, 2012. T. Dirkman made a motion to adjourn the meeting. D. Harrigan seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 6:23 P.M.

Derek Muench, Cemetery Manager