

**CEMETERY COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES**

April 19, 2012  
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  
John Bilka

**STAFF PRESENT**

Val Mellon  
Kevin Glaeser  
Sandy Ronski

**OTHERS**

John Zabel

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

**Approval of the minutes from November 10, 2011**

The minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

**Introduction of the new Cemetery Manager & new Commission Member**

The new Cemetery Manager, Kevin Glaeser, and the new Commission member, John Bilka, were introduced.

**Discussion of 2012 budget & its effects on operations**

K. Glaeser told the commission that the biggest change in 2012 is that the cemetery staff has gone from five full-time grounds workers to two. He said that things are going well so far. Although burials are down, the revenue has increased due to the fee changes. K. Glaeser also mentioned that the cemetery office has moved to the Public Works building at 2655 S 35<sup>th</sup> Street. There is a sign on the former office door with a phone number to call for assistance. V. Mellon stated that we are looking at hiring some workers from Holiday House to help with flower planting. T. Dirkman questioned why seasonal workers have not already been brought in to help. K. Glaeser stated that we haven't needed them until recently and that he plans to hire some 1200-hour employees. J. Sladky stated that the cemetery staff could pull seasonal workers from other departments, if needed, as it is considered a pool of seasonal employees. T. Dirkman questioned if there was any type of volunteer service that we could use to have someone available in the office to greet people and provide assistance locating graves. D. Schneider suggested a college student be trained to sit in the office when it's busy before Memorial Day. J. Sladky said that any complaints need to come to the alderman.

T. Dirkman questioned if S. Ronski could work at the office on the cemetery grounds during the month of May. K. Glaeser said that is not possible, because he only has two full-time clerks to assist with the Cemetery, Parks, Zoo, and Public Works Departments, and they are attempting to do the work that seven employees were previously doing. It is a huge burden when one of them is gone for a day. He just doesn't have the staff to do what everyone would like to see done. T. Dirkman brought up the idea again of having a commission-based employee who could sell spaces and greet people in the office. That's how his organization operates. K. Glaeser said that this is a year of discovery, and after a year, we may know what changes will need to be made.

### **Discussion & possible action on use of credit card machine**

V. Mellon told the committee that the credit card machine was originally obtained in order for Evergreen to stay competitive with Knollwood and Calvary who either have payment plans or accept credit cards. The credit card machine does have a cost to it. J. Sladky questioned if the City was better off financing the purchase versus accepting credit cards.

S. Ronski said that at Calvary they allow you to put 20% down, then take 12 months to pay without interest. If it's an at-need burial, it needs to be paid in full before burial. Knollwood accepts credit cards and has a payment plan. People have to put a minimum of 10% down. There is a two year plan with 0% interest or a four year plan with 8 ½% interest.

S. Ronski said that the Commission had discussed having a payment plan for Evergreen but decided against it due to the labor costs involved with maintaining the program and dealing with defaults. In 2010, 28 out of 90 spaces sold (31.11%) were paid by credit card. Of those 28 spaces, 8 were immediate need and 20 were pre-need. In 2011, 20 out of 106 spaces sold (18.87%) were paid by credit card. Of those 20 spaces, 3 were immediate need and 17 were pre-need. V. Mellon said that the lease for the credit card equipment states that the monthly lease agreement fee is \$55 per month plus taxes with a loss and destruction waiver fee of \$5 per month per unit. J. Sladky said that he thinks it's important that we have a machine in the City, but he doesn't want to have several different lease agreements.

### **Discussion of 2012 Memorial Day plans**

V. Mellon said that her focus is to have the grounds looking nice, especially for Memorial Day. She indicated that K. Glaeser's priority is to make the grounds safe and remove the hazardous trees. He indicated that most of those have been addressed. S. Ronski said that Mary Lou Salomon from the Manitowoc County Civil War Round Table used to organize the Cemetery Walk. Since she is no longer with that organization, it doesn't appear that there will be a Walk this year.

### **Discussion of any new ideas to market the cemetery or increase profits**

D. Schneider questioned how revenues were doing in 2012. S. Ronski said that revenues were up for the first quarter of 2012 compared to the first quarter of 2011. Most years there are generally not many lot sales during that time, but that can vary from year to year. V. Mellon asked about the Memorial Tree Program. S. Ronski said that we average about 20 sales per year. D. Harrigan said that in his opinion Evergreen Cemetery is one of the top five cemeteries in the state aesthetically. K. Glaeser mentioned that the City is looking at creating waivers for those interested in volunteering in the different departments.

D. Schneider questioned why the size of the markers is limited at Evergreen Cemetery. D. Schneider said that was done so that everything was uniform. Large monuments are allowed if a family owns six spaces on each side of the marker. If large monuments are close together, then workers may not be able to get the backhoe in to dig. D. Schneider said that he personally dug some graves by hand when they couldn't get the backhoe in. He said that we never allowed markers with a base (two pieces), because they always move the headstone. There would be more potential for damage if you were trying to place one piece on top of another. D. Harrigan thought that allowing larger markers would allow families more options, especially with the intricate laser engraving that is being done these days. J. Zabel

suggested putting a monument out where, for example, one family could engrave the west side of the monument and another family could engrave the east side of the monument.

J. Waak questioned how we could market the Dow Chapel more. S. Ronski said that one family used it after hours for a remembrance ceremony. V. Mellon said that we originally envisioned having chairs at the chapel. S. Ronski reminded the Commission that we cannot charge fees for the use of the chapel according to the conditions of the trust. T. Dirkman said that if we don't market it as being available for committal services, then no one is going to use it. J. Waak suggested that if we have a Memorial Day service, we should hold it at the chapel. D. Harrigan said that he doesn't see why people would go there when they could go right to the gravesite. V. Mellon said that they had hoped that people would buy in that section, and the chapel would be a selling feature of that section.

D. Dirkman brought up the idea of the ossuary. D. Harrigan said that he saw the results of a nationwide survey a few years ago which stated that over half of the people take the cremains home and the majority of those people put the cremains either in the bedroom closet or underneath the bed. Some people divide them up among different family members or take them to a memorable location in the person's life. T. Dirkman suggested a price of \$495 or \$595 to dispose of the cremains in an ossuary and display a memorial plaque. The investment is minimal, perhaps \$1,000 for the vault. The double depth vault has a 6" pipe coming out of the ground that has a decorative cover. The cremains go down the tube, and there is a place for memorialization nearby called a cenotaph. None of the other local cemeteries currently offer this option. He said that the purpose would be to capture descendents, because their family member is at Evergreen. It is another way to build heritage and stop people from keeping the cremains at home. J. Zabel mentioned that Wildwood Cemetery has a community cremation garden.

K. Glaeser said that he had two requests for green burials. J. Bilka brought up the idea of organic caskets. T. Dirkman said that his company does green burials in a woodsy area. He said that you need an area that is somewhat undesirable, because there is going to be sinkage. You will either have to let the grass grow or require an uncovered burial vault to be placed upside-down in the grave to prevent sunken areas. T. Dirkman said that Evergreen is really not set up for it but could maybe use the side of the hill for those. K. Glaeser said that you could actually make it more expensive than a regular burial, if you wanted. T. Dirkman said that it might be an option in Evergreen West if you let that get overgrown. Generally, the people in the green burial area don't get headstones. V. Mellon said that the plus side is that you don't have to mow it. D. Harrigan said that some areas have trails through them with rocks with names designating the burials. T. Dirkman said that the advanced places use GPS coordinates (no lot markers) to determine burial locations.

*D. Harrigan made a motion to adjourn the meeting. D. Schneider seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 5:58 P.M.*

smsr