

**CEMETERY COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES**

January 23, 2014  
6:00 P.M.

Engineering/Planning Conference Room, City Hall

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Ald. Jason Sladky, Chairman  
Dennis Harrigan, Vice-Chairman  
John Bilka  
Dennis Schneider  
Eric Zabel

**STAFF PRESENT**

Dan Koski  
Chad Scheinoha  
Sandy Ronski

**OTHERS**

*Ald. Sladky called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.*

**Annual election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson**

D. Schneider made a motion to nominate Ald. Sladky as the Chairperson. D. Harrigan seconded the nomination. Ald. Sladky was unanimously approved as the Chairperson.

Ald. Sladky made a motion to nominate D. Harrigan as the Vice-Chairperson. D. Schneider seconded the nomination. D. Harrigan was unanimously approved as the Vice-Chairperson.

**Approval of the minutes from January 24, 2013**

J. Bilka made a motion to approve the minutes. E. Zabel seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

**Introduction of City staff new to the Cemetery Commission**

Ald. Sladky introduced D. Koski as the Director of Public Infrastructure and C. Scheinoha as the team leader of the cemetery.

**Discussion & possible action on letter from Priscilla Schroeder requesting reimbursement of \$500 of the \$1,000 fee charged for disinterment of two babies from the same space on 10/25/13**

C. Scheinoha explained that Priscilla Schroeder had two babies disinterred from one space, and that S. Ronski spoke with Cotter Funeral Home regarding the charges. Because two babies had not previously been disinterred from one grave before, S. Ronski indicated that she would get back to the funeral home regarding the charges, which would be somewhere between \$500 and \$1000 on a weekday. After S. Ronski spoke with C. Scheinoha, it was determined that the charges would be \$1,000, which was consistent with our fee schedule which states, "Disinterment fees will be the same as the corresponding burial or inurnment fees, except for in-ground fetuses or in the case of frost." If two babies in separate containers were buried on the same space on the same day, the opening and closing fee would be \$500 and the surcharge to place a second burial on the space would be \$500 for a total of \$1,000. S. Ronski then sent a fax to Cotter F.H. and informed them of the \$1,000 charge.

C. Scheinoha stated that Priscilla Schroeder believes the cost is too high and would like to be re-imbursed for half of the cost since they were side-by-side on the same space. Disinterments, however, take more time, because you have to be careful not to damage the container. Ald. Sladky made a motion to refund \$500 of the disinterment fees. D. Schneider seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The request will be forwarded on to the Public Infrastructure Committee.

**Update, discussion, & possible action regarding sales of columbarium niches**

E. Zabel requested this item be added to the agenda to see how things were going. S. Ronski passed out an informational sheet regarding the original costs, the sales, and the number of years needed to break even. Fred Radandt, a former commission member previously involved with Knollwood, had estimated that that 10% of the niches would be sold each year. Unfortunately, sales have not been as high as predicted. If sales continue at the same rate, it will take approximately another 4.5 years to pay off the investment in the columbariums. S. Ronski indicated that there has not been a lot of interest in the columbariums. D. Harrigan said that from what he hears, there is not a lot of interest at the other cemeteries in the area either.

**Discussion & possible action regarding annual review of cemetery fees**

S. Ronski passed out a sheet comparing the fees of some of the local private and municipal cemeteries. D. Harrigan said that families do not have a problem with the winter burial surcharges; however, he has several families complain about the cost of opening and closing a grave for cremation burials, especially if a second right of interment is involved. He thinks he has had about six families take the cremation urn home with them instead of burying it, because they didn't want to pay \$1,000 to "open a little hole." He said that he feels that it gives people a sense of resentment that the cemetery would charge that much. D. Schneider said that years ago, people were attracted to Evergreen, because the fees were low and the grounds were beautiful. He said that people will go where they can get a deal. D. Harrigan said that it goes to volume, and he would like to see that continue instead of people saying that they will take the cremation home.

S. Ronski said that in 2012 after fees were raised, our sales were down about 50% from 2011, but in 2013, the sales were down only about 25% compared to 2011. In 2013, there were approximately 167 total burials. In the past, there had been a non-resident rate for lot purchases, but then there were issues with that, because the non-residents would find residents to purchase the lots for them. D. Harrigan said that people don't have a problem with traditional burial fees, but he constantly gets comments about the cremation burial fees. D. Harrigan suggested cutting the price and gaining in volume along with improving the reputation of Evergreen Cemetery. D. Schneider said that many people who purchased spaces before we added the surcharge for more than one burial on a space are probably not happy with the cemetery. E. Zabel said that his perspective is that if, for example, a grandma and grandpa purchased a stone, and now had an inscription added to the marker for a grandchild buried on the space with them, the grandparents would not be happy with their stone, because that is not what they intended.

*D. Schneider left at 6:43.*

Ald. Sladky stated that we are in a customer oriented business. D. Harrigan suggested doing promotional work for the cemetery and reducing the cost in order to gain more volume. He

said it doesn't help to reduce fees without making people aware of it. D. Harrigan said that if you charge excessively for things, that will come back to hurt you in the end. There is currently no advertising money budgeted for the cemetery. D. Koski suggested that we could put some information in the Senior Center's monthly newsletter. D. Harrigan said that you need to advertise to a new market and increase awareness. The older people generally already have spaces. Price is part of the equation, but he said that he generally does not hear complaints that the cost of spaces is high even though the cemetery is funded by the City. D. Harrigan said that no cemeteries can compete with Evergreen, but people need to be made aware of it. J. Bilka questioned if the City sends out a survey and if a question could be added to see what people would be willing to pay. Ald. Sladky said that he would be willing to look closer at the surcharge.

**Discussion & possible action on any new ideas to fulfill the commission's duty to ensure financial stability, formulate plans for infrastructure improvements, propose marketing ideas and positively influence the growth and prosperity of the cemetery**

E. Zabel questioned plans for the silo in Evergreen West. C. Scheinoha is not familiar with the issues, but he will check it out. As far as the grass in Evergreen West cutting goes, the Parks Department now comes in with their Rhino mower, which saves time. The cemetery staff still cut around trees with a smaller Z-trac mower.

D. Harrigan questioned the policy that prohibits cemetery staff from assisting with caskets. Ald. Sladky indicated the previous supervisor, Kevin Glaeser, felt strongly about the issue because of liability concerns. D. Harrigan said that there are no other cemeteries in the state that have declined to help his funeral home with the caskets. C. Scheinoha indicated the staff doesn't mind, but there are only two people there now, and two people can't lift the caskets. D. Harrigan said that people don't always have pallbearers, and that generally four to six pallbearers are needed depending on the size of the deceased person. C. Scheinoha and Ald. Sladky are willing to revisit the issue. D. Koski said that assisting with the casket appears to be good customer service. Ald. Sladky was concerned about funerals where there are no pallbearers. J. Bilka suggested that there be a policy that cemetery staff cannot assist if there are less than four people. D. Harrigan said that seasonal employees are not involved with carrying the caskets.

**Discussion & possible action on meeting schedule**

The consensus of the commission members was to meet once per year unless issues developed.

*E. Zabel made a motion to adjourn the meeting. J. Bilka seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 7:07 P.M.*

smsr