

## **Cemetery Advisory Board Meeting**

**October 1, 2014**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Groat at 5:00 p.m.

**Members Present:** Brodie Rockenbaugh, Jeremy Hoyt

**Others Present:** Dave Cook, Daryl Ingram, Donald Boerger, Vicki McKinnon, Bill McKinnon

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes for the meeting on May 13, 2014 (were not approved at this meeting)

### **Agenda:**

Mr. Rockenbaugh said the cemetery should be somewhere we go that we should be proud of. The rules are there for a reason and should be followed. The maintenance of the grounds should be a high priority.

Mr. Hoyt said Friday, we are going to hire a company to come out and mow the cemetery, and then they will give us a quote to see what the cost will be for them to continue to mow year round. It takes a lot of man hours to keep the grass mowed and weed-eat.

Mr. McKinnon asked whether Marysville Street employees are going to do the upkeep anymore? Mr. Rockenbaugh said he thinks this is part of an evaluation process to see what is more cost effective. We should have our employees that we hold to the upmost standards working in the Cemetery, so that monuments, trees and flowers do not get damaged. The Company that is coming has experience with cemeteries. They take care of the cemetery down by Mount Carmel called Forrest Lawn.

Mr. Rockenbaugh said the test run will tell if it is going to be beneficial to hire this company to come in and take care of the cemetery for us, or if it will be more beneficial to hire a fulltime staff to join the staff that is currently on board out there. Ron Schilling is currently the unofficial guy at Oakdale, he takes a great amount of pride in his work at the cemetery and has experience.

Mrs. Groat asked, when we will decide if this will be kept internal or if it will be outsourced. Mr. Hoyt said that we need to figure out how much it will cost to be outsourced. After we get that quote, we need to evaluate our options on whether we can get staff and equipment maintenance for the cost of the quote. Mrs. Groat asked if that will focus on seasonal needs? Mr. Rockenbaugh said mowing season starts in mid-April and goes through October, and that most companies set aside an amount of how much it costs for each mowing and then extrapolate that amount to build an annual total.

Mr. Ingram said it will be interesting to see to him. The City has misjudged the cemetery for years, on how many employees they put at the cemetery and how long it takes to maintain it. It will be interesting to see what they do with 10 guys when the City usually only has 4-5 employees working the Cemetery. The City has misjudged the amount of work that is out there. Mr. Hoyt said that it might be 20 people, they do it for a living, and they know how many people to bring out to their locations. Mr. Hoyt said this is a learning process with bringing the company in.

Mr. Boerger said a lot of times we just plant trees and we do not keep them up. He said that the Cemetery down by Channel 4 news is beautiful. He does not want to read in the paper another article complaining about the upkeep of the cemetery. There will always be someone complaining about something. If we can at least get the bigger picture than what it looks like now, he feels that we are moving in the right direction.

Mrs. Groat asked whether we are more comfortable with the way things are now, than we were six to eight months ago. Mr. Rockenbaugh said in reference to the letter to the editor we focused on getting it back to where it needed to be. The dryer weather has helped with the upkeep. He feels really good about the staff getting the push on how the cemetery looks.

**Long Range Planning:** Mrs. Groat said she spoke to Mr. Andrako who stated that we are not in bad shape. If we bury 100 people a year, and when we open the new part of the cemetery we will have at least 25 years. Mr. Hoyt said that is assuming all the other sections are at a 100% capacity, which they are not. Mrs. Groat said she would like to put the cemetery on good footing.

Mrs. Groat said Mr. Ingram suggested we have a Perpetual Care Fund. Mr. Ingram said a Perpetual Care Fund. Mrs. Groat said that we do not have it in budget. Mr. Ingram said that as far as he was aware (now this is dated) that there was some money set aside but it was only allowed to get to a certain level before it was shut off. In years past, when they had a Perpetual Care Fund, they have not left it alone to let it grow. It would get big and then they would deplete the fund. Mrs. Groat said that the point now is that if you bring that idea back to Council we could ordinance quantify it, so it could not be pirated. Critical to a Perpetual Care Fund is setting it up by ordinance, talk to the powers that be financially and look at it from the point, that in 25 years, we need to buy land we have a perpetual fund supporting. Mr. Ingram said that is not what the Perpetual Care Fund is for, it is only to fund the care of the cemetery. Mr. Ingram said you also have to prepare for the cemetery to be out of land in 25 years.

Mrs. Groat said we have to two long term goals, 1.) If a Perpetual Care Fund for current need and maintenance, and 2.) Long term land aggrandizement. Mr. Ingram said the way to go is to buy the land today and in 25 years funeral customs change and the land is not needed. You have just bought land for a more reasonable rate. Mr. Ingram questions whether the City is committed to the Cemetery, because the City has been so sporadic with their involvement.

Mrs. Groat said the City is committed by Ordinance, so if an individual or Administration chooses not to support it, we are still committed by Ordinance.

Mrs. Groat said she wanted to ask Mr. Hoyt to prepare some pricing on burial fees. Mr. Hoyt said that he is still researching costs. Generally, our fees were 60-70% of what others were. There is still some more investigation that needs to be done. Mrs. Groat said she reviewed the notes from where she first started on the Advisory Board, and it has been the opinion of all the Advisory Boards that we increase the non-resident fees, as being a dis-incentive. At the same time we increase the non-resident fees, we are going to redefine residency very loosely, either the person purchasing or the deceased, any residency in the City, minimum of five years in the Ordinance. We are not trying to discourage previous residence from returning but to discourage Central Ohioans from Cemetery shopping.

Mr. Ingram said that is something a lot of cemeteries have done in recent years. He does not see people cemetery shopping.

Mrs. Groat said as long as she has been with the Advisory Board, there has not been a Perpetual Care Fund. We are concerned about what happens, we have a finite landlocked cemetery, and what happens when the finite landlocked area runs out. That is the direction that I was hoping this committee would take. Are we of a common consensus on that is where we need to be thinking, if so, what would you like from Administration in terms of research information or next steps?

Mr. Boerger said that personally we are on the right track. What do we do when the cemetery runs out? Where do we go with funding? Who is going to maintain the cemetery? He was googling cemeteries and here are what people are doing to raise money for cemeteries: letting sheep run through it, yoga in the cemetery, turning them into dog parks, because cemeteries are the last thing that people worry about.

Mr. Hoyt said it does make sense in 25 years if we are selling a hundred, how do we fund the maintenance of Oakdale, so we build somewhere else, that funding would go there. That is where the Perpetual Care Fund would come in.

Mrs. Groat asked whether Mr. Rockenbaugh, Mr. Hoyt and Administration should investigate a rate schedule? Mr. Ingram said rate increases need to be considered and the cemetery will be a lot more evenly funded if there was an automatic increase every couple years.

Mrs. Groat asked Mr. Hoyt and Mr. Rockenbaugh to follow up with the appropriate people and so we can get it on the 2016 budget.

Mr. Rockenbaugh said materials have gone up, fuel has gone up, the cost of everything has increased for upkeep of the cemetery.

Mrs. Groat said let's pretend, project 30 years down the road, what is our next step and how can we be proactive, instead of 30 years down the road we are short. Do you want to look for land, different ways to bury, how do you want to handle more burials than we have room for, it will happen eventually.

Mr. Cook said long term we are going to have to start looking for ground, but when you build the new ones start looking at how to save space. Mrs. Groat asked if Mr. Cook was suggesting going someplace else. Mr. Cook said he is not saying buy in the next six months, but just start looking around. Mrs. Groat said Mr. Berbee is aware of a European Model where you rent your plot for X number of years, and then the remains are removed. Mr. Cook asked what are you going to do with them legally? Mrs. Groat asked whether this should be investigated. Mr. Boeger said that is huge in Europe and Germany As a group this is not an investigatory focus.

Mr. Ingram said we should look into mausoleums. Mr. Boerger asked if we could start burying people on top of each other? Mr. Cook said that they are doing that now with VA cemeteries, whoever dies first in husband and wife will be on the bottom. Mr. Ingram said if you put all the cemeteries in the country in one place it will be the size of New Jersey, we just do not have a space issue. Mrs. Groat said that in Marysville we do. Mr. Hoyt said we are going to have to look at different properties, and how applicable that land would be. Mrs. Groat said is it logical to keep this as an idea to be looking at down the road by Mr. Rockenbaugh, Mr. Hoyt, and Administration. Mr. Hoyt said it doesn't hurt to have a couple target properties or locations, that way if we drive by and we see a for sale sign, now we are not forcing someone to give us their property. They would want to sell it. Mrs. Groat said she is not going to be part of eminent domain on this one, she does believe in eminent domain but not for something like this.

Mrs. Groat said we are going to ask Administration to check rates, possible acquisition of property (very long term), and Perpetual Care Fund. We would go to Council and Ms. Chavarria about having or a fund a line item. Focus our money through that fund. Mr. Ingram said you might want to check the legality of Perpetual Care Funds through municipalities. Mrs. Groat asked Mr. Hoyt to follow up with Mr. Aslaner about a Perpetual Care Fund.

Mrs. Groat asked about establishing another meeting to see what goals we have met and if that is the direction we still want to go?

Mr. Rockenbaugh said we should have a quote from the company.

Mrs. Groat would like to have the quote from the company reported at a Council Meeting. The meeting will be to hear about the quote from the contractors, if there was any land that looked like potential.

Mr. Rockenbaugh said that next week Public Service Clerk, Carolyn Steepe, is going to attend an Ohio Cemetery Association Conference in Dayton. Ron Schilling and I are

going to Cleveland on Thursday for a fall maintenance seminar, which is a great opportunity for networking.

The next Cemetery Advisory Board meeting will be December 3, 2014 at 4:30pm.

**Adjournment:** Mrs. Groat adjourned the meeting at 6:00pm.