

Greenwood Cemetery Advisory Board Minutes
February 3, 2023
Municipal Building, 151 Martin
8:30 a.m.

I. Call To Order

Linda Buchanan, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

II. Roll Call

Present: Chair Linda Buchanan
Pam DeWeese (left at 9:42 a.m.)
Linda Peterson
Laura Schreiner
George Stern (left at 9:51 a.m.)
Margaret Suter
Joseph Vercellone

Absent: None

Staff: City Clerk Bingham; Deputy Clerk Woods

III. Introduction of Guests

Cheri Arcome of Creative Collaborations answered questions from the Board.

In reply to Board inquiry, Ms. Arcome stated:

- Her typical work week includes sales, burials, vendor coordination, communications with funeral directors, regular inspections of Greenwood, maintenance communications, updating records, customer service, and genealogy;
- Usually if someone wants to purchase a grave, Ms. Arcome would email them the relevant information, meet them at Greenwood at a later date to show them available graves, provide them with instructions for purchasing the grave via email, and then would update the records and issue a deed once payment is received. In burials that were not pre-planned, sometimes Ms. Arcome or the funeral director selects a grave, and then sometimes she works with the family and the funeral director to facilitate grave selection. Persons hoping to bury cremated remains can also reach out to Ms. Arcome to potentially purchase available burial space;
- She advises families initially that often grass seed will not take if too many decorative items are placed on a grave;
- She was not aware of any rules or regulations limiting the number of decorative items that could be left by a grave;
- She is aware of green burials and said she did not personally like burials with only a shroud or burials with biodegradable boxes. She said the former were sometimes upsetting for loved ones and the latter were unsafe in terms of transporting the body. She said she would be willing to pursue green burials further if that was the City's direction;
- Cremations are on the rise, and second and third rights of interment seemed be accommodating most everyone;

- Given the size of Greenwood, there would not be a lot of room for growth. Focusing on maintenance and top-notch service would likely be a more effective focus;
- Since Greenwood is small, she does not work to generate sales leads. The sales leads that do occur usually stem from the community via word-of-mouth, funeral directors, relatives with loved ones at Greenwood, and houses of worship;
- In order to generate more income, the rest of the graves should be released;
- Greenwood's strengths include its historical significance on a state-wide scale and could be used in tours, educational programming, and to procure grants, the advocacy and stewardship of the Greenwood Cemetery Advisory Board, the Perpetual Care Endowment¹ Fund, the Museum's involvement, the location of the Cemetery in a residential area, and the Cemetery's importance to the community;
- Greenwood's weaknesses include limited burial space, a declining number of grave sales, no real opportunity to develop additional burial space;
- Greenwood's opportunities include fundraising for educational purposes, audio tours, tour maps, and the Perpetual Care Endowment² Fund, a partnership with the Museum, educational programming for elementary and middle schoolers, and volunteer opportunities for students and community members;
- Greenwood's challenges include limited space and limited earning opportunities;
- The Cemetery is reaching the end of its revenue life and the Board should be planning to increase the Perpetual Care Endowment³ Fund through fundraising in order to maintain the present maintenance standards into the future;
- She could be available for the May 5, 2023 meeting;
- The split between pre-need and at-need purchases is about equal, presently;
- She only shows graves available to sell. On occasion a family may request that Ms. Arcome verify that there is no available space near a family member, and Ms. Arcome will verify that for a requesting family;
- Tours of the Cemetery tend to be up to two hours for at-need situations;
- Greenwood presently does not allow for a green burial, since vaults are required. She works with three cemeteries that allow for green burials and they have not had one yet, so there is limited demand in the area so far;
- Asking families to remove decorations that have been present for years might be a contentious issue;
- If the Board wants to limit decorations, the consequences for exceeding the limits should be made clear in the Rules and Regulations and possibly posted in the Cemetery;
- Purchasers of graves have not been provided the Rules and Regulations at time of purchase thus far, but they can be provided with the Rules and Regulations moving forward;
- Glenwood in Flint, Michigan could provide fundraising examples as a historic cemetery that does fundraising events to build up its Perpetual Care funds Endowment⁴;
- She believed that if Greenwood had niches available in a columbarium or more graves they would sell.

In reply to Ms. Peterson, CC Bingham said the City Manager still needed to approve the recent updates proposed by the Board for the Cemetery Rules and Regulations.

¹ As amended at the April 14, 2023 meeting.

² As amended at the April 14, 2023 meeting.

³ As amended at the April 14, 2023 meeting.

⁴ As amended at the April 14, 2023 meeting.

Ms. Arcome asked how limitations on grave decorations would be enforced.

Ms. Peterson said the issue historically has been referred to Ms. Arcome to be addressed in the best way possible. She said it would also be helpful to have the updated Rules available on the City website. She said she wanted to make sure the Rules and Regulations were being submitted to the City Manager for approval so they can be updated. She said she was in favor of the volunteer opportunities. She said that she had an opportunity to meet one of the vendors that works with Ms. Arcome and was very impressed with him.

Chair Buchanan said an imminent Board goal would be to complete the remove obstructions- survey⁵ and then to release more plots.

Ms. Suter said she was in support of expanding volunteer opportunities as well.

Ms. DeWeese said the Board should review its limitations on decorations to make sure they could be enforced in a fair way.

Ms. Schreiner said that while those families placing many decorations are experiencing grief, their grief could not be elevated over the grief of the other families with descendants in the Cemetery. She said the City could send out a copy of the Rules and Regulations to all families to remind them of the requirements, and then the City could enforce the Rules and Regulations after a bit of time. She stated that potential purchasers of graves should be provided the Rules and Regulations before making a purchase and at the time of purchase.

The Board and Ms. Arcome discussed:

- Ways of transmitting the Rules and Regulations in a sensitive manner to the families and loved ones of those buried in Greenwood; and,
- The possibility of implementing a summer flowers and winter blankets program for the Cemetery in order to raise Perpetual Care Endowment⁶ funds.

Ms. Peterson suggested some ways that the upcoming Memorial Day event could be made more engaging.

The Chair stated that MD Pielack had committed the excess funds raised for the Taylors' gravestones to be used for the Cemetery's maintenance projects like cleaning and restoring historic markers⁷.

Ms. Arcome recommended the Board get that commitment in writing so those funds could be used for maintenance before using the Cemetery's Perpetual Care Endowment⁸ Fund.

Dr. Vercellone raised a concern that using the funds raised for the Taylors for general Cemetery maintenance might be an issue.

The Chair said the donors were informed that might occur.

⁵ As amended at the April 14, 2023 meeting.

⁶ As amended at the April 14, 2023 meeting.

⁷ As amended at the April 14, 2023 meeting.

⁸ As amended at the April 14, 2023 meeting.

Ms. Schreiner noted that the Board should receive documentation demonstrating that.

The Board thanked Ms. Arcome for coming.

IV. Approval Of The Minutes

A. Review of the Minutes of December 2, 2022

MOTION: by Schreiner, seconded by Peterson:
To approve the minutes of December 2, 2022 as submitted.

VOTE: Yeas, 5
Nays, 0

V. Unfinished Business

VI. New Business

The new business items were postponed to the next meeting.

VII. Reports

- A. **Update from Clerk's Office**
- B. **Financial Reports**
- C. **Cemetery Sales & Activity**
- D. **City Manager's Report - December 2022 & January 2023**

VIII. Open To The Public For Matters Not On The Agenda

IX. Board Comments

X. Adjourn

Chair Buchanan adjourned the meeting at 9:54 a.m.


Alexandria Bingham, City Clerk


Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist