

Greenwood Cemetery Advisory Board Minutes
July 7, 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; Paul Connell, Jacqueline Patt, Linda Peterson (left at 10:32 a.m.), Laura Schreiner, Margaret Suter, Joseph Vercellone

Absent: None

Staff: City Clerk Bingham

III. 2023-2024 Organization

Ms. Patt and Mr. Connell introduced themselves.

MOTION: by Schreiner, seconded by Suter:
To nominate Linda Buchanan for the role of Chair for another year.

VOTE: Yeas, 7
Nays, 0

MOTION: by Schreiner, seconded by Suter:
To nominate Linda Peterson for the role of Vice Chair for another year.

VOTE: Yeas, 7
Nays, 0

IV. Approval of the Minutes

A. Review of the Minutes of April 14, 2023

MOTION: by Buchanan, seconded by Suter:
To approve the minutes of April 14, 2023 as amended.

VOTE: Yeas, 7
Nays, 0

V. Unfinished Business

- A. Receipt of field survey report, consideration of price increases to the cemetery fee schedule and consideration of grave release recommendation.

CC Bingham presented the item and answered informational questions from the Commission.

Board member discussion was as follows:

- Presently, more people tend to pursue cremations than full burials;
- Greenwood has a higher percentage of full casket burials than the national average;
- Increasing the fees would increase the amount of money that could be contributed to the Perpetual Care Fund;
- The City offers a payment plan for pre-need plots, which could make the proposed fee increases accessible for more people. An immediate need would require an immediate payment;
- Sections B and C receive direct sun. It would be worthwhile to find a way to add character - possibly through landscaping or tree planting - to those sections;
- Sections B and C are likely desirable. People would likely be interested in purchasing the plots in Sections B and C if the City made them available;
- It would be important to see what could be added to Sections B and C without increasing the City's liability long-term. Benches with an arbor over it might be an option, or a niche that could receive additional cremains;
- Section A previously had a tree that had to be removed, which was a loss for the Cemetery;
- Raising the fees would mean that Greenwood's prices would be on the higher end for local, public cemeteries but Greenwood is a smaller cemetery with fewer plots remaining. This necessitates raising prices;
- The prices from local cemeteries were gathered mid-pandemic, and the Board should seek more current pricing for those cemeteries in order to better make an informed decision on raising Greenwood's fees;
- It would be beneficial to decide on a price increase presently so that any emergency release of graves would be subject to the higher pricing;
- The discussion of raising fees again is a recently raised conversation and it would be appropriate to consider the options;
- The graves in Section B adjacent to Section A appear to have higher demand due to the density of historic graves in Section A;¹~~Section A has higher demand because it has more historic graves;~~
- There was no need to increase the fees because the City would continue maintaining the Cemetery even without funds from the Perpetual Care Fund;
- Greenwood can raise its prices as much as the market will bear. The only way to determine that is to set a price and to see whether purchases are made at that price;
- The Board previously recommended that plots only be released a number at a time, and the Commission followed suit;
- It might be more appropriate now to allow for the release of all remaining plots at once;
- Prices for plots and niches in different locations in Michigan were discussed;
- The history of prior changes to plot locations and layout in Greenwood was provided to the newest Board members;
- Ways of increasing the available burial spaces in Greenwood, including a columbarium, have been under consideration;
- Plot reclamation had been explored in the past and other options were pursued at that time;
- If the prices are raised, the Commission should also be asked to release all remaining available plots;
- It might be appropriate to release all of the plots at a higher price, and to re-evaluate once 20% of those plots have been sold;

¹ As amended at the August 4, 2023 meeting.

- It might be appropriate to instead release 24 additional plots in any available location to provide Ms. Arcome with more options while still reserving some plots for future release;
- If the goal is to raise the funds as soon as possible, all of the plots should be released for sale;
- Releases were previously done in stages in order to ensure that blocks of plots were available for people who wanted contiguous plots, and to discourage crowding near Section A;
- Ms. Arcome will not break up a group of contiguous plots if the purchaser is only looking for a single plot, and if she runs into an issue she would raise the concern with the Board; and,
- Given that there are only 88 spaces left, it would be more appropriate to raise the fees to \$6,000 per full plot, \$4,000 for plots with two cremation spaces, \$2,000 for the plots with one cremation space, with right of burial increased to \$1,000 and a deed transfer could be increased to \$400.

MOTION: by Patt, seconded by Vercellone:

To make a recommendation to the City Commission to amend the fee schedule to increase the following fees for Greenwood Cemetery: full burials would be \$6,000, additional rights of burial would be \$1,000, two cremation spaces would be \$4,000, grave space accommodating one cremation would be \$2,000, and administrative fee for transfer of ownership would go to \$400.

And to recommend the release of the 88 graves suitable for burial in the flush rows in Section B, and to direct the GCAB to evaluate the fees for plot costs again after 20% of these plots have been sold.

VOTE: Yeas, 6
Nays, 1 (Peterson)

CC Bingham said she would speak with DPS about possible landscaping options for Sections B and C.

VI. New Business

VII. Reports

- Update from Museum Director Leslie Pielack (when applicable)
- Update from Clerk's Office
- Financial Reports
- Cemetery Sales & Activity
- City Manager's Report (April, May & June)

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

IX. Board Comments

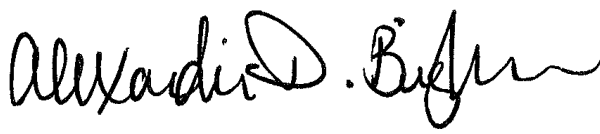
Chair Buchanan said the updates to the Fish monuments were good. It might be beneficial if the Friends of the Birmingham Museum created a preservation fund.

The Board briefly discussed the historical value and high desirability of Greenwood.

CC Bingham explained how fees for opening and closing a grave are paid.

X. Adjourn

Chair Buchanan adjourned the meeting at 10:45 a.m.



Alexandria Bingham, City Clerk

Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist