

Missoula Cemetery Board Meeting  
Thursday, September 1, 2016  
12:00pm  
Missoula City Cemetery Office

**Minutes**

**Present:** Sharee Fraser, Kim Seeberger, Mary Lou Cordis, Pat McHugh, Ron Regan, Mary Ellen Stubb  
Bryan Von Lossberg (City Council), Nick Kaufman (WGM)

**Absent:** Marjorie Jacobs, Lani Moore

**Approval of board minutes:** July 2016 - unanimously approved as submitted.

**Public comment.** BOB JORDAN (Garden City Monument Services) - Not present.

**Financials.** Revenues reviewed. Balances as of August 31, 2016: Current revenue = \$33,900.00

Fund balances = Care Fund \$256,680.22      Niche Fund \$87,449.54      Memorial Fund \$7,489.80

Mr. Regan reminded the board that he has a placeholder in the Care Fund of \$45,000 for a new mower, but he is leaning toward replacing mower decks for the current Hustler mowers instead which could give them another six years of life and save the cemetery a lot of money.

Expenditures reviewed. The new budget was adopted a few weeks ago. Mr. Regan said our initial request of \$5,000 for training was denied. He then took the request before the budget committee to state our case. The training was approved in the final budget. It has been included in the line items on our current budget sheet.

**New or Continuing Items.**

**INTRODUCE NEW BOARD MEMBER.** Mr. Regan introduced Mrs. Kim Seeberger as our newest board member. He said Mrs. Seeberger takes a lot of interest in the cemetery and he was excited for her to join the board. Mrs. Fraser stated we need people with heart on this board and a commitment to preserving the cemetery. Mrs. Fraser had a chance to talk with Mrs. Seeberger and felt she was an excellent choice.

**LAND: Northside Urban Renewal District.** Nick Kaufman (WGM) presented the revised land use concept. The major change for the cemetery from the original proposal involves trading some cemetery land for land currently owned by MRL, specifically in their gravel pit area adjacent to the cemetery. This land swap would then allow the residential plans to surround the back parcel of the cemetery.

Mr. Kaufman assured the cemetery board that the concerns in their letter (dated February 4, 2016) were heard:

- The sanctity of the cemetery grounds are important to uphold.
- Trails are not conducive to that mission so all trails will be outside the cemetery perimeter.
- The intended purpose for land accumulation was for burial purposes and it is important not to lose cemetery land. The proposed land swap maintains cemetery land and allows the residential plan to flow better.

Mr. Regan stressed that the land swap would be acre for acre so no cemetery land would be lost. Squaring up the cemetery would be beneficial in many ways like roads, irrigation, and green space in place of the berms. He felt we could not ask for anything better. Board members agreed. Mr. Regan did request that there be a buffer between the cemetery and the residential. He asked that a boulevard with trees border the cemetery, curb/gutter/road/sidewalk then separate the boulevard from the first row of residential homes, and the first row of homes be single story. The board strongly agreed. Mr. Regan then suggested that a buffer of some kind also be placed along the back fence of the cemetery to block the railroad spur and all the items stored there. This becomes

an issue when selling graves. Mr. McHugh asked about environmental testing with the land swap. Mr. Kaufman said all new purchases are checked for environmental contamination.

There was much discussion on the overall plans for roads, trails, business and residential areas. The Russell Street overpass was discussed. Mr. Kaufman stated that federal money could not be used in a way that interfered with parkland zoning and the cemetery land falls within that zoning. The Russell Street connection will be outside the cemetery. Squaring up the cemetery preserves cemetery land and allows better options for this new interchange.

Mrs. Fraser commended WGM on how well they have listened to and addressed the concerns of the board. Mr. Regan also thanked Mr. Kaufman for listening to the board and developing different options that met the goals of all parties. Mr. Kaufman stated the board has allowed him to see a new perspective of function of a cemetery of which he was unaware.

**LAND: Catholic parcel.** Mr. Regan was approached by the Public Works Director, John Wilson, as to whether the cemetery was interested in purchasing the small section of Catholic owned land that butts up to cemetery land. Mr. Regan feels that the proposed future land swap as stated today by WGM takes this off the table. He said he suggested the sewer plant would be a better fit for this land instead of the cemetery.

**NEW BUDGET:**

**PLOTTER.** Mr. Regan asked for a motion to begin the paperwork process for the cemetery to purchase a plotter using \$15,000 of care fund money. He stated this was the first step toward the cemetery selling our own stones. The plotter will allow us to inscribe all death dates on site. There are a number of areas in the cemetery to set up a sandblasting room for that purpose. The idea of the plotter and selling stones was presented to city council as a new revenue source for the cemetery. The numbers presented to council were very conservative but Mr. Regan believes the cemetery will do very well at stones and inscriptions. The plotter can also benefit the cemetery by creating the stencils for signs for the cemetery roads and regulations.

Mr. McHugh asked about training and whether additional staffing was needed. Mr. Regan stated the training is two 12-hour days which guarantee the ability to blast delicate items like roses by the end of the training. Mr. Regan said we have great staff who can make this work and we are at a good point to begin new projects. The cemetery regularly receives inquiries for headstones. Cemetery research with stone quarries supports the idea that we could offer a new service and generate revenue for the cemetery. Ordering pre-engraved headstones that meet our 14-inch stone width requirement is not a special order so we could provide faster delivery and set the stones ourselves. This would not happen overnight because policies would have to be put in place.

Mr. McHugh felt this was a good fit for the cemetery. **MOTION: Mr. McHugh moved that the cemetery proceed with the paperwork to purchase the plotter out of the care fund. Mrs. Cordis seconded. Motion approved: 4 ayes, 1 absent.**

**SOD CUTTER.** Mr. Regan stated the current sod cutter was purchased in 1983 and is falling apart. He asked for a motion to purchase a new one using \$4,500 of care fund money. **MOTION: Mrs. Cordis moved that the cemetery purchase a sod cutter with care fund money. Mrs. Seeberger seconded. Motion approved: 4 ayes, 1 absent.**

**COLUMBARIUMS.** Mr. Regan said the cemetery plan is to purchase three columbariums costing \$30,000 each. Each wall has 120 niches: 40 singles and 40 doubles (doubles allow for 80 people.) The idea is to place these walls by the old baby section in the A Blocks. Mr. Regan noted that these walls have increased by \$15,000 per wall since the last time we purchased. Mr. McHugh asked how many niches remained in our current columbarium walls. Mr. Regan said we have ten spots left so we hope to have the new walls in place by spring. He noted that we currently do not have quite this much in the niche fund but he is hoping the wall cost will come in lower because we are ordering three walls. This purchase will deplete the niche wall fund but it will re-grow with the sale of new niches. Mr. Regan said he would bring the three required quotes before the cemetery for a final motion to purchase. **MOTION: Mr. McHugh moved that the cemetery proceed with gathering quotes to purchase three columbariums out of the niche wall fund. Mrs. Seeberger seconded. Motion approved: 4 ayes, 1 absent.**

**STORIES AND STONES.** Mrs. Stubb reported that the tour is a coming together nicely. There are currently twenty storytellers this year which includes two new stories (Catlin and Lehsou.) Mr. Regan noted that a few storytellers asked to be removed from the list and some regulars will not be here this year. Mrs. Stubb confirmed that a few of the more popular stories (Gleim and Nance) would not be here this year due to illness or family commitment. The storytellers no longer participating will be missed (Jones, Bell, and Maclean) but that happens. Sometimes they take a few years off and come back while other times new people may replace them. We are working with the university to rent carts as in the past. Mrs. Stubb contacted the director of the fraternities and asked for 7-10 student volunteers to assist with parking and the guidebook table again this year. A list of potluck items was noted and the board was asked to bring a contribution to the potluck.

### **Informational Items.**

**CEMETERY CHAPEL USE FOR FIREARM BACKGROUND CHECKS. (Bryan Von Lossberg, City Council, Ward 1)** Mr. Von Lossberg asked the cemetery to consider allowing the chapel building to be used for a place to conduct background checks on firearm transactions. He understands this is a controversial topic and was not asking for a decision but simply consideration of the idea. Mr. Von Lossberg gave the history behind the proposed new city ordinance. He stated mandatory background checks on all firearm transactions have proven to reduce suicides and partner homicides by forty percent. He believes finding a place to conduct these background checks is relevant to the ordinance being approved.

There was much discussion about the process of how the background checks would be conducted and how it might impact the mission of the cemetery. Mr. Regan stated the cemetery was always open to ideas and working with others but the board must determine if the cemetery is the proper setting for something like this. Also, the cemetery ordinance currently prohibits firearms in the cemetery except for honor guards at military funerals. The city has work to do on all ordinances before this new ordinance could pass.

Mrs. Fraser expressed concern over guns openly being brought onto the cemetery grounds. Mrs. Cordis and Mr. McHugh both expressed concerns about possible scheduling issues. Mrs. Cordis noted that cemetery burials were the priority so it would be difficult to set a schedule for background checks. Mr. McHugh expressed concern that the cemetery does not come across as promoting this issue and whether wording would be needed to explicitly say that we take no position. Mrs. Seeberger asked if registration would be voluntary or required and wondered why a more central location such as the fairgrounds was not being considered. Mr. Von Lossberg said that if the gun registration ordinance passes then it would become city law, therefore it would be required. He said the entire city ordinance must be amended and meet the approval of the city attorney and the city council. If the board agreed to the land use he would structure the wording in the ordinance to exclude times of funerals and address board concerns.

Mr. Regan stated the city attorney would change the city ordinance and the cemetery would then set policies around this issue. Mr. McHugh asked for clarification that if the city ordinance did not mention cemetery then whether any city property could potentially be used for this purpose. He asked whether Mr. Von Lossberg might find a better suited location. Mr. Von Lossberg agreed. He stated he would be happy to work with the cemetery to explore ordinance and policy language but he would only pursue that if the board was comfortable with this proposal. Mrs. Fraser said the board is always willing to listen to proposals and help others when they could and when it did not interfere with the purpose of the cemetery.

Mr. Von Lossberg thanked the board for hearing his proposal and taking it under consideration. The board had further discussion after Mr. Von Lossberg left but no decision was made on this issue.

**Adjournment** at 2:00pm. Next meeting will be October 6, 2016.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Ellen Stubb