

Missoula Cemetery Board Meeting
Thursday, June 2, 2011
1:30pm
Ruth Bennett Memorial Chapel
Missoula Cemetery

Minutes

Present: Sharee Fraser, Mary Lou Cordis, Doug Waters, Ron Regan, Mary Ellen Stubb, Robert Brown, Carol Gordon, Marjorie Jacobs

Absent: Pat McHugh

1. Approval of board minutes: May 2011 - unanimously approved as submitted.
2. Items involving guests: Dr. Robert Brown, Director, Historical Museum at Fort Missoula re: Collaboration with Historical Museum and Stories and Stones.

Mr. Waters reviewed the tour collaboration idea as originally initiated between Mrs. Stubb and Dr. Brown. Mr. Waters recently met with Dr. Brown to discuss a list of concerns Mr. Waters has regarding political implications for two government entities working together on such a project. Today is an informational meeting to discuss setting a long-term goal for Stories and Stones. The board will be asked for their ideas, concerns, and direction.

Dr. Brown said the Historical Museum's mission was to keep Missoula's history alive. He credits Missoula Cemetery as doing a fantastic job meeting that mission, second only to the Historical Museum itself. He understands the tour is a big project that could be costly and require manpower which could interfere with general cemetery operation. Stories and Stones has become such an important community program that the museum now wants to help it continue. The museum does not want to take over the event but wishes to assist in areas such as advertising, vendor agreements, and various revenue producing opportunities. The benefit for the Historical Museum is two fold:

- Their mission of keeping Missoula's history is met, and
- All financial obligations and revenues would be shared per an open agreement agreeable to all and finalized prior to this cooperative effort.

Dr. Brown reviewed Mr. Waters' concerns with Missoula County Risk Manager, Hal Luttschwager, and was assured this cooperative effort would pose no liability risk to either organizations. For events such as Stories and Stones Dr. Brown would utilize his non-profit organization, Friends of the Historical Museum. This allows events to bypass commissioner and council red tape as events are run as a private non-profit. Dr. Brown stated his idea would be to institutionalize the event so it can be packaged and information passed on throughout any future staff changes.

Concerns addressed:

- Need for additional volunteers. Yes the museum would provide volunteers.
- Growth. Mrs. Gordon said it has been exciting and fun to see it continue to grow. Mr. Waters said he is not negative on this idea however it is growing so large that it requires a lot of maintenance staff hours and he is concerned that will increase. He noted last year the cemetery had to rely on outside departments for staffing as cemetery maintenance staff was unable to work the event.

- Future staff responsibilities. Mr. Regan asked if institutionalizing the event meant that future staff and board members would be obligated to continue with the tour even if they did not want to do it? Dr. Brown explained the partnering concept was to keep from re-inventing the tour each year. However, the cemetery board would remain the authority and could kill the project when they wish. His role would be as co-sponsor and to assist in making the tour go off seamlessly through any future staff transitions. The museum would have no governing authority over the tour.

At this point, Mr. Waters asked the board to consider the possibility of their joining efforts to develop a Friends of the Cemetery non-profit organization which could work directly with Friends of the Historical Museum and greatly assist in the seamless continuation of events such as Stories and Stones.

- Parking. Mrs. Jacobs wondered as this event continues to grow can the cemetery accommodate additional parking? Mr. Regan said parking can continue to be expanded as needed by simply moving the compost piles to the back lot. Mr. Waters said four to five volunteers are needed just to man the parking lot. So far local scouts have done a wonderful job. Dr. Brown said charging admission to the event would cut down on traffic but not as much as the board would think.

Mrs. Stubb was asked for her input. She stated her opinion of this venture as a winning situation for all.

- The museum wins because the tour meets their mission by continuing to bring local history to life in an entertaining way for people of all ages.
- The cemetery wins because it gains advertising, promotional, and sales opportunities that are currently not accessible. And,
- The public wins because it continues to have a free event that definitely is meeting a niche in the community as demonstrated by the continued growth in attendance.
- Staff changes and responsibilities. Mrs. Jacobs asked Mrs. Stubb if this tour was currently spelled out in her job description. Mrs. Stubb said no, however, Mr. Regan clarified it should fall under "other duties as assigned" as most of the work was done during regular working hours.

Mrs. Jacobs' concern is that if Stories and Stones is not currently spelled out in the sexton job description and Mrs. Stubb should leave the cemetery then what grounds would the cemetery have to force the next sexton into doing this event in the same capacity under the same terms? Dr. Brown said institutionalizing the program means it would continue to exist and there is the possibility that Friends of the Historical Museum could take over the organization of the program, not maintenance though, in order to keep it going. Mrs. Jacobs voiced concern over an outside agency accessing cemetery records, however, Mrs. Stubb assured her that cemetery records were public record so everyone has the right to access them.

- Future commitment. Mr. Waters noted the tour depends heavily on storytellers who will eventually need to be replaced. Currently Mrs. Stubb is the taskmaster that assures the tour has storytellers and those storytellers have the information they need to make their presentations. Mr. Regan noted the next sexton would need to have an interest in history in order to carry on with this project. He was concerned about tying other people's hands down the road if they should not want to be involved in this project.

Dr. Brown stated the bottom line proposal was for Friends of the Historical Museum to assist in putting on this project however, all decisions rest with the cemetery board. The museum just wants to help make it happen as the tour has such a tremendous audience that it would be great promotion for the museum as well as the cemetery. Mr. Waters noted there is the possibility to publish the guidebooks which could be sold at the museum and would be great advertisement for the cemetery.

Mr. Waters will put information together and bring back answers to his questions for the July 7th board meeting. He asked the board to think critically about the project. The cemetery's mission is to bury people and maintain records. Stories and Stones is a side project to that. Mrs. Gordon and Mrs. Fraser agreed this was a great idea. Mr. Waters said city administration may not like it. This project would be good for both organizations if there is a way to avoid involving politics.

3. Public comment: None.

4. Financials:

a. Revenues: Mr. Waters pointed out that cemetery revenue stays very similar year after year. Finance will post interest late fall for the past fiscal year.

b. Expenditures: reviewed. All board members disagree with amount used for the current fee cost study and asked if they would get to review these charges with city administration prior to finalizing payments to the consultant. Mr. Waters said the budget will end up short this year but he is using vacancy savings and remaining money in accounts to have the lowest deficit possible.

5. Motions needed. (*Full board attendance is needed*)

6. New or Continuing Items for Discussion:

a. Stories and Stones / Historical Museum collaboration (see guest discussion above).

b. Fee cost study - update. Mr. Waters said four areas were to be reported on in the study: market review, cost of services, cost fee comparison, and cost of service study. He said Mrs. Stubb and Mr. Regan have done 99.9% of the work on this project which involved an enormous amount of hours and documentation. The consultant's reports will summarize their work.

Mr. Waters was shocked that the city adds an additional \$200K to the cost of the cemetery for allocation of city administrative services such as attorney, finance, human resources, etc. Mr. Waters said the consultant has heard input from staff but has been reluctant to make changes.

The cost results are supposed to reflect what it costs to operate the cemetery. However, Mr. Waters said the numbers do not make sense. For example open/close for infant is currently donated by the cemetery but according to this report the cost recovery would mean charging \$2K and a typical casket burial open/close which the cemetery currently charges \$400 would cost \$3568. Mr. Regan noted the consultant simply lumped the cemetery budget, salaries, and administrative costs and spread it over all 114 designated job tasks done in a year. He said the noted costs of service are what the cemetery would need to charge just to break even. Mrs. Stubb wished to clarify that the consultant was not recommending the cemetery change rates to meet the cost analysis but the report was simply stating the cost of service. She said rates should reflect current market in relation to other area cemeteries just as Missoula Cemetery has done in years past.

Mrs. Fraser was concerned over the lack of consideration with the fact the cemetery is tax supported? Mr. Waters agreed and felt the report should reflect tax payer support to the cemetery. He stated the city council had always wanted to keep cemetery costs low for that reason. All historical records note that the cemetery was never meant to be a big revenue maker and would not ever pay for itself.

Mrs. Gordon asked what would happen next. Mr. Waters said once the consultant has updated all the information the cost analysis would be finalized and go before council. At that time, Mr. Waters and the cemetery board will need to make their recommendations for fee changes. The

board was concerned with the number of staff hours required of Mr. Regan and Mrs. Stubb to complete this study. Mr. Regan was concerned about the study implying the cemetery should begin doing more monument work as only Sunset and St. Mary's do this while all other cemeteries surveyed have no monument liability. He also noted that cemetery staff has long brainstormed revenue options such as an on-site crematory or funeral home but those recommendations were omitted from the cost survey report.

7. Informational Items *(These items require NO immediate board action but are strictly informational item)*

- a. Memorial Holiday - Mrs. Stubb stated traffic this year was steady and busy compared to previous years. Mr. Regan agreed and said at times traffic became quite congested in sections. Mr. Waters said the cemetery was looking sharp and praised Mr. Regan and Mrs. Stubb for all their hard work in making the grounds and office run so smoothly.
- b. Injury - Mr. Waters reported an initial injury report had come into the cemetery office regarding Mrs. Pickering twisting her leg in a low spot on the grounds. The incident was turned into MMIA and would be given the same consideration as a pothole incident.
- c. Board swearing in process - Mr. Waters reminded board members to go to the Mayor's office to complete their board re-assignment process.

8. Adjournment. Next meeting: July 7, 2011

**To conserve costs, please bring your agenda and any pertinent documents with you to meeting