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# City of Langley

## CEMETERY BOARD MINUTES

**December 3, 2014, 4:30 pm**

**LANGLEY CITY HALL 112 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Langley WA**

Present: Marilyn Strong, Rene Neff, Debbie Mahler, Marilyn Helsel, Romeo Enslow, Lucinda Herring

1. The minutes from the last meeting were reviewed and approved with the following correction by Marilyn S.: The new fee that the city would charge families to pay at the time of burial to help cover the costs of a sexton position would not be called opening and closing costs, as that is the fee they pay Gabelein for digging and filling in the grave. We will need to think of a different name, perhaps the Sexton Fee.

2. The bulk of our meeting was a further discussion of the creation of a Sexton position. We started with a report from Debbie Mahler and Marilyn Strong who met earlier to talk about the financial aspect of the position – where the money might come from and how it would relate to the responsibilities that Debbie carries. At the last meeting Cary was saying that there might be \$5,000 out of the general fund that could be allocated to funding a sexton position(s). However, \$3,000 of that pays for Public Works wages and benefits, and could not be touched. Public Works will still mark the graves. The money that goes toward Debbie's salary could probably be shifted over, but that is only \$2,122.

She would still handle the receiving of money for the graves, but she would be happy to hand over other responsibilities that she now has, but doesn't have the time to do well, i.e. meeting with families to communicate the policies and procedures of the cemetery, oversee the selling the plots on behalf of the city, going up to the cemetery to show families where the grave is, calling Public Works to have it marked, making sure the family goes back after it is marked to make sure it is correct, moving headstones, checking to

see if there are bodies buried in graves before they are sold (where there might be questions) etc.

However, the biggest piece of information that Debbie shared is that a paid sexton that was hired by the City could not be a contractor. By Washington state law they would have to be an employee, which means there would be additional monies needed to pay for their benefits.

Debbie's other idea for where money might come from: The 25% of grave sales that right now is being put into the Improvement fund could be by ordinance through city council channeled into a fund to pay the sexton(s). In the past year the cemetery took in \$7,500 in plot sales. (This of course, varies from year to year.) \$1,875 of that (25%) went into the improvement fund, so it is not a lot of money to work with.

She suggested that a special non-profit could be created so that the city could turn over the running of the cemetery to them. The non-profit would then create and pay for a sexton position(s). (Or perhaps The Friends of the Langley Woodmen Cemetery would be interested in expanding their non-profit to include this.) This would be a way around the high fee that being a city employee would demand.

Another alternative would be to create a Cemetery District – go before a vote of the people to have district lines drawn (probably farther a field than just the city of Langley) so that tax money could help pay for the running of the cemetery. This is how Bayview Cemetery and the one in Coupeville are run.

No decisions were made, but Debbie agreed to do some calling to gather info into other Municipal Cemeteries to see how they are run and report at our next meeting.

3. Marilyn S. reported that she will be preparing a report to the City Council on Monday, December 16<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm, and asked for input as to how to frame this whole conversation and got input about other items that might be highlighted.

4. Debbie reported that she recently got a complaint from Mrs. Raymond Zimmerman who said that when Duane Gabelein's son dug the grave for Dorothy Burke's burial that he ran over nearby graves, left muddy tracks on

them and broke off plants. Debbie wanted us to have this feedback as we consider lining up an alternative gravedigger given other problems that have occurred around Duane's recent work.

5. We talked about the need to still have Allen Ament's group of graves redrawn by Public works – to change that area from regular graves to green graves. Debbie is not sure how to do it without Challis and reported that the woman who was recently hired was really in over her head and resigned. The city is currently interviewing for the job again. Debbie will track this.

6. Romeo brought up the need for more gravel to laid on the old road and where it curves around for upkeep. A decision was made to allocate up to \$1,000 for that, and Romeo will contact Jim Lux to order it and do the work.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marilyn Strong