

CEMETERY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Thursday, January 23, 2024 @ 4:00 pm, Landa Haus

1. CALL TO ORDER:

4:02 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL:

X	Lynn Thompson (Chair)	X	Cynthia Foster	X	Jeff Bransford (Park Staff)
X	Dana Watson (Vice Chair)	X	Jillian Bliss	X	Samantha Morrison (Park Staff)
X	Kyle Coker	X	Chad Donegan (Park Staff)		Gene Bagwell (Cemetery Manager)
X	Connie Krause	X	Geronimo Aguirre (Park Staff)	X	Hunter Haberly (Cemetery Sexton)
X	Jan Kingsbury	X	Shari Silvio (Park Staff)		

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Approval of regular meeting minutes from Oct 23, 2024

4. CITIZEN'S COMMUNICATIONS

5. PRESENTATIONS

N/A

6. DISCUSSION AND ACTION

a. Cemetery Software

Overview of New Software Deployment

- Collaboration with the City Secretary's Office on implementing new software for record-keeping.
- The software will manage records for the city secretary and provide public access to cemetery information.

Issue with Missing Records

- Initial Problem: Discovered nearly 9,000 names missing from cemetery records, primarily from the old section.
- Current Status: Reduced the number of missing plots from 9,234 to 8,852 through efforts by Hunter, Gail Wilkinson, and team members.

Data Collection Process

- Team members use smartphones or iPads with GPS to locate specific headstones.
- Data entry includes first name, last name, date of birth, and date of death.
- Challenges due to full-time jobs limiting time available for data collection.

Proposal to Hire Temporary Staff

- Proposal: Hire a temporary individual experienced with city work at \$15 per hour.
- Estimate: Approximately 300 hours needed to complete the remaining work.
- Budget Request: Up to \$5,000 to complete the task within 7-8 weeks.
- Rationale: Without hiring, completion could take nearly a year.

Motion and Approval

- Motion: Approve funding up to \$5,000 for hiring temporary staff.
- Outcome: Motion passed unanimously.

b. Field of Graves

Overview of Excavation Phases

- Phase One: Conducted in February (almost a year ago), involved scraping to a depth of 12 inches.
- Findings: Evidence of grave shafts, prehistoric artifacts, pottery.
- Phase Two: Initiated after feedback from the Texas State Archaeology, involved deeper excavation up to 3 feet.
- Completed in November.

Discovery of Human Remains

- During Phase Two, a human skull was unearthed, leading to immediate halting of work.
- The affected area was backfilled to protect the remains.
- Interpretation suggests burials may have been conducted in continuous trenches rather than individuals.

Next Steps for Memorial Redesign

- Redesign Requirement: Must adapt the original memorial design to account for newly discovered burial areas.
- Contact the original designer to obtain a cost estimate for redesigning the memorial.
- Ensure the redesign avoids subsurface work as per Texas Historic Commission (THC) guidelines.
- Potential for using above-ground materials like limestone rocks and signage for memorialization.

Motion and Approval

- Motion: Grant permission to contact designers for a redesign of the memorial without committing funds at this stage.
- Outcome: Motion passed unanimously.

Public Relations and Donor Communication

- Strategy to transparently communicate discoveries and redesign plans to donors and the public.
- Emphasis on maintaining trust and explaining the necessity of redesign due to archaeological findings.

c. 2025 Soul Searching

This year's theme was chosen: "*When cotton was king*"

- Theme Proposal: This year's theme will be the cotton industry, incorporating historical elements like fabric and sewing demonstrations.
- Additional thoughts: Ideas were to include interactive displays and historical reenactments related to the cemetery's heritage.

ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

- A. Field of Graves
- B. Cemetery Software (if needed)
- C. 2025 Soul Searching
- D. Gate at the New Braunfels Cemetery

7. ADJOURNMENT

4:14pm