




June 21, 2023

To: Catherine Crosby, Town Manager
Cc: Marty Stone, Assistant Town Manager; Chris Johnson, T&I Development Director; Amanda Grogan, Budget Director
From: Shawn Purvis, Deputy Town Manager 
Re: Proposed Cemetery Improvement Project

The purpose of this memo is to provide Town Council with options to consider regarding the proposed Cemetery Parking and Columbarium project. The memo provides a brief description of the project and information about the project bids for Town Council to consider as they review the recommended options and the implications of each option.

Background

Design work for cemetery improvements that include improved parking and accessibility and a memorial area to include columbaria has been occurring for a few years but has been slowed by the pandemic and transition of town staff. After getting the project back on track and guiding it through the Town's planning review process, staff received bids for the project on June 1, 2023. Project bids are good for 60 days from the opening and will expire before the August 8 Town Council meeting. The project plans included two primary phases – one for the parking and accessibility and one for the memorial/columbaria area. The Town originally budgeted \$600,000 from the Cemetery Fund for the project, and the updated estimate for the project prior to bidding was \$730,000. The project does not include the actual installation of the 780 columbaria niches. The Town would purchase a group of niches as needed through General Fund allocations in the future. Money from the sale of the niches would go the Cemetery Fund, not the General Fund.

Discussion

The low bid for the project was a Base Bid (parking) for \$609,000 and \$738,000 for Alternate 1 (memorial/columbaria area). The bid also included two smaller alternates of \$76,000 for additional electrical work for the columbaria area and \$12,000 for sidewalk/street safety improvements along Upchurch Street. The total lowest bid package was \$1,435,000, which is \$890,000 more than the remaining project budget. There is approximately \$545,000 remaining in the Cemetery Fund. Using the remaining balance in the Cemetery Fund, would leave a funding gap of \$345,000. Approval to move forward with any portion of the project will require budget and project ordinance amendments ranging from \$76,000 to \$890,000.

Recommendation

Staff does not recommend depleting the Cemetery Fund for this project. If Council chooses to proceed with the full build out of the project at any point, staff does recommend a review of the fee schedule by the Finance Committee, followed by a recommendation to Town Council that would allow the sale of columbaria niches to offset at least a portion of the project costs and replenish the Cemetery Fund. Staff recommends Town Council consider the following options.

- **Delay the project until a future date.** If Council does not wish to proceed at this time, the project can be delayed and rebid in the future after evaluating the fee schedule and funding options through the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) process. It is unknown what effect a delay would have on the cost of the project. **There would be no additional cost to the Town at this time.**
- **Complete the Base Bid and Alternate 3.** If Council chooses to move forward with the parking improvements (Base Bid), staff recommends also completing Alternate 3, which is tied to the site improvements for the parking and sidewalks. **The total cost for the Base Bid and Alternate 3 would be \$621,000 and require additional funding of \$76,000.** Staff recommends using the Cemetery Fund for the additional allocation if Council selects this option. The Town can reevaluate the columbaria area (Alternate 1 and Alternate 2) in the future through the CIP process after a review of the fee schedule. If staff identifies additional funds with the transition into a new fiscal year, Council could reconsider the columbaria area sooner.
- **Complete the entire project.** If Council chooses to move forward with the project in its entirety, awarding a contract for the Base Bid and all three alternates, Council will need to approve a budget amendment that allocates additional funding from the General Fund fund balance. **The total cost for the Base Bid and all alternates would be \$1.435 million, and require additional funding of \$890,000.** If Council chooses this option, staff recommends splitting the additional funding from the General Fund and Cemetery Fund at \$445,000 each. It is important to restate that revenues from the sale of columbaria niches would go to the Cemetery Fund, not the General Fund.