



Wylie Cemetery Advisory Board Minutes

January 6, 2022 – 6:00 PM

Council Chambers - 300 Country Club Road, Building #100, Wylie, Texas 75098

CALL TO ORDER

Board Chair Sandra Stone called the regular meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The following Cemetery Advisory Board members were present: Board Vice-Chair Keith Stephens, Board Member Gloria Suarez, Board Member Juan Azcarate, Board Member Allison Stowe, and Board Member Kimberly Summers. Board Member Sandra Mondy was absent. Board Alternates Jami Lindquist and Erin Williams were both present.

Staff present included: Assistant City Manager Renae' Ollie, Parks and Recreation Director Robert Diaz, and Parks and Recreation Administrative Assistant II Janet Hawkes.

CITIZEN COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

No Citizens came forward.

REGULAR AGENDA

A. Consider, and act upon, approval of the October 7, 2021 Regular Cemetery Advisory Board minutes.

Board Action

A motion was made by Board Vice-Chair Stephens, seconded by Board Member Stowe, to approve the October 7, 2021 Cemetery Advisory Board minutes. A vote was taken and motion passed 6-0 with Board Member Mondy absent.

WORK SESSION

WS1. Discuss draft of the cemetery rules and regulations.

Assistant City Manager Ollie presented the Board with the first draft of the cemetery rules and regulations, which includes Hughes Cemetery, Kreymer Cemetery, and Wylie Cemetery. Assistant City Manager Ollie confirmed that the existing cemetery names will remain the same after ownership is transferred from the current cemetery board to the City of Wylie. She advised that staff used the City of Allen and City of Mesquite rules and regulations as guidelines when putting together the initial draft of rules and regulations for the City of Wylie. Assistant City Manager Ollie explained that the initial draft of rules and regulations includes several specific details that staff will need to confirm with the current cemetery board, as well as Allen Funeral Home.

Board Vice-Chair Stephens pointed out Sec. 78-371 (b) “Cemetery care”, expressing his concern over neglected grave markers and monuments not being maintained by the City, explaining that often the responsible family members of a plot cannot be located in order to assume the responsibility thereof. Board Vice-Chair Stephens also noted Sec.78-378 (a) “Requirements for grave markers and monuments”, where it lists the requirement of all monuments in the cemetery’s new section to be flush to the ground with the exception of family lot upright markers; he questioned whether the transitioned cemeteries would adhere to this requirement. Assistant City Manager Ollie responded that staff had already made note of certain requirements listed in both sections and ensured that staff plans to verify and likely adhere to the requirements currently set in place by the current cemetery board and the Allen Funeral Home.

Board Member Suarez asked for clarification on Sec. 78-381 (a) “Placement of objects in the cemetery”. Board Chair Stone explained that typically a 72 hour removal of objects requirement refers to post-funeral personal items or potted plants of which the family members intend to retrieve; and typically the fourteen day removal of objects requirement refers to post-funeral flowers and similar. Board Chair Stone recommended that no more than one arrangement per plot be permitted during the mowing season, as to not obstruct the areas and thus create difficulty for needed maintenance. Assistant City Manager Ollie stated that staff would consider flexibility in regards to the placement of objects in the cemetery as recommended. Board Member Suarez also inquired on irrigation in the cemeteries, to which Director Diaz advised there wasn’t any irrigation, nor would irrigation installation likely be considered at any of the City owned cemeteries.

Board Chair Stone inquired on the allowance of double stacked burials in these cemeteries as noted in Sec. 78-379 “Burial rights”. Assistant City Manager Ollie advised that staff would verify this allowance with the existing cemetery board and Allen Funeral Home. She also stated that plots already purchased would be grandfathered in as it pertains to the requirements for grave markers, monuments and benches. Board Chair Stone recommended that volunteers be sought out to help with minor maintenance of the grave markers. She also recommended funds be allocated for grave leveling as well as the provision of small semi-permanent grave markers that note the name, birth date, and death date on which for any plots whose family has chosen or is unable to purchase a permanent grave marker. In reference to Sec. 78-378 (h) Board Chair Stone recommended the allowance of a durable bench (made of granite, stone, or similar) to be placed within the perimeters of a plot if so desired. Board Vice-Chair Stephens and Board Member Stowe felt benches placed on plots could impede a contractor’s ability to maneuver lawn equipment within the cemetery. They also preferred the idea of the City installing quality uniform benches in specific areas of the cemeteries, to which Board Chair Stone and staff agreed would be a good alternative. In regards to maintenance, Board Chair Stone recommended that the grave digging in the cemeteries be done by City staff instead of an outside contractor, primarily due to the large equipment used for digging and potential damages that could result if not done properly and carefully. Assistant City Manager Ollie stated that plots already purchased would be grandfathered in as it pertains to the requirements for grave markers, monuments and benches.

Board Chair Stone inquired on the transition of plot deeds and records. Assistant City Manager Ollie advised that Allen Funeral Home has been maintaining the records for Wylie Cemetery and Kreymer Cemetery; however the organization of these records would prove to be a challenge for staff because many of the records consist of hand written notes, unfiled deeds, and little to no current information on next of kin for many of the cemetery internments. She added that a City employee would be appointed to assume the role as Cemetery Sexton, and would be responsible for the management and delegation of the various responsibilities that will encompass plot sales, record keeping, cemetery maintenance, etc.

Board Member Suarez questioned detail accuracy for standard cemetery space found in Sec 78-373 (a) “Purchase options”. Assistant City Manager Ollie responded that staff intends to check with the current cemetery board and Allen Funeral home to gather a further definition thereof, with the plan to keep in line with the standards that are currently set in place. Board Member Suarez requested an explanation for Sec 78-374 “Resale options”; it was explained by Board Chair Stone and Board Vice-Chair Stephens that the sale, transfer or assignment of a plot should not exceed the current market value of the City’s burial space, and that the City must receive a notice of the transaction. They also recommended that the City specifies their right for refusal of a plot sale when deemed

necessary. It was also noted by Board Vice-Chair Stephens that the ownership of a plot is for the right of interment, not actual right to the specific property; therefore an owner cannot plant trees, install fencing, etc., on the plot(s) and must adhere to the rules and regulations and ordinances set in place.

In regards to Sec 78-378 (h), “Requirements for grave markers and monuments” Board Chair Stone and Board Vice-Chair Stephens explained that many years ago high grave mounds were common in cemeteries, but this is no longer a typical practice. They explained that the grave mounds were made high and the growth of grass on them was restricted in order to discourage people from walking on top of the gravesites; however, high grave mounds often create maintenance difficulties. City Manager Ollie advised that the City would keep in line with the current guidelines set.

Pertaining to Sec 78-372 “Hours of operation”, Board Vice-chair Stephens recommended the City not lock the cemetery gates as it could impede first responders from entering the cemetery. Assistant City Manager Ollie advised that the existing cemetery gates in Wylie are automated, and that it is state law for cemeteries to remain unlocked at all times; however, cemetery hours of operation may be installed and gates may be shut to coincide with those set hours. The Board consensus was to set the operational hours from sunrise to sunset.

Regarding Sec 78-383 “Payment prerequisite to use” Board Member Suarez asked how this would coincide with burial insurance policies. Board Chair Stone responded that typically the plot must be paid in full prior to interment, and that burial insurance policies are turned over to the Cemetery Sexton.

Assistant City Manager Ollie reviewed Division 4.-“Perpetual Care Fund” with the Board Members explaining that the City will designate a trust fund for any and all new plot sales, of which a percentage will be turned into the City’s Finance Department for deposit into the Perpetual Care account. She explained that any excess of funds received such as donations and fundraiser money, would remain in a separate account in order to maintain and manage the cemeteries. Assistant City Manager Ollie stated that the Perpetual Care Fund is subject to audits and local health codes, and the Texas Funeral Commission regulates and monitors these accounts.

Board Chair Stone recommended that the City set up a Facebook page for the Wylie Cemeteries, to which Board Vice-Chair Stephens agreed and added can be a great source to aid in locating interment’s next of kin when there is the absence of grave markers or written verification records.

Board Chair Stone recommended that the City look into the current plot size(s) and consider offering the standard plot size of 4’ by 10’ for new plots, in order to save space and allow more availability of plots. Assistant City Manager Ollie agreed staff should look into the sizes currently being offered in the cemetery’s new areas and decide accordingly.

Board Alternate Lindquist recommended the placement of flags and/or wreaths on Veteran graves during specific patriotic holidays, and volunteered to take on the responsibility in doing so. Board Member Suarez asked staff to contact the Eagle Scout, James Ali, who presented at the October 7, 2021 Cemetery Advisory Board meeting, and check the status of his project to place flags or similar patriotic memorial markers on Veteran gravesites. Assistant City Manager Ollie agreed that Veteran graves should receive placement of memorial flags or markers as suggested by Board Alternate Lindquist, and advised that staff will pursue James Ali for an update on his Eagle Scout project.

WS2. Future agenda items.

Assistant City Manager Ollie recommended for the Board to reach out to Administrative Assistant II Janet Hawkes with any ideas on capital projects that staff could look into in order to build a list for future fund allocation.

Assistant City Manager Ollie advised that any committees set up for cemetery related work or projects is permitted in the City Charter, but must all go before City Council for prior approval.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Board Vice-Chair Stephens, seconded by Board Member Azcarate, to adjourn the meeting at 6:59 p.m. A vote was taken and motion passed 6-0 with Board Member Mondy absent.

Sandra Stone, Board Chair

ATTEST:

Janet Hawkes, Administrative Assistant II