

Metro | *Meeting minutes*

Meeting: Cemetery Advisory Committee meeting
Date/time: Monday, Mar. 10, 2014, 1 p.m.
Place: Room 370 A/B
Purpose: Quarterly meeting

Attendees

Committee: Hannah Allan, David Noble, Michelle Gregory, Laurel Smith, Terry McCall

Metro: Councilor Shirley Craddick, Paul Slyman, Melisa McDonald, Monty Woods, Matthew Herbert, Emma Williams, Phyllis Cole

Absent

Verne Duncan, Bo Nevue, Meg McCauley, Marie Henry

The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chair Allan at 1:03 p.m.

Summary from the Dec. 9, 2013 meeting was approved without revision.

Programmatic Updates

Finance and Operations

Melisa McDonald presented the Committee with an overview of day-to-day programmatic financial figures. She did not include the costs involved with the reclamation project or the Oregon Mortuary Board (OMB) settlement, since doing so would skew the numbers.

As of January 2014 revenue was at 113% of the projected amount, and expenses came in at 93%. There were 23 sales, including pre-need purchases. There were 17 burials, of which 14 were casket services. It was suggested that the program track the average contract sale amount, and this will be incorporated into future financials.

The need to market cremation burials was discussed; for although the Metro cemeteries have historically seen a much higher number of casket sales, this is against the overall trend of the industry. In addition to education on cremation options, the value of a citizenry aware of the Second Right of Interment was also discussed. The Committee suggested that part of the overall education about our properties would also include an effort to let the funeral homes know what is available.

Melisa is holding quarterly meetings with the burial service vendor. There is a seven day window for opting out; a few "growing pain" issues have arisen and while they are being addressed, so this option is beneficial.

Archiving of Metro's cemetery records is moving toward scanning rather than microfilming; this will save time and money, and is being tried on a six-month basis. On March 18, 2014, Metro will present an update to the OMB on the Lone Fir cleanup project.

In the absence of Justin Patterson, Paul Slyman made a slide presentation on the 223rd Avenue site. He explained that extra soil had been deposited at this site for decades, by a number of Metro programs, including the cemeteries.

The cleanup of the 223rd Avenue site will utilize the careful forensic process that was so successful in Multnomah Park Cemetery. The project will take place between July 4th and Labor Day. Goats will eat down the shrubs, the grass will be taken to compost, and the soil humps will be shifted one by one to St. Johns Prairie. Hydro seeding will be included with added topsoil, and some form of memorialization will occur.

The Fairview Police have been informed, and the neighbors are interested in being kept in the loop. Metro will not build on the site, and it was noted that a trail and a bench would be welcomed by the families in the area.

New Business – Restoration of historic memorials

Bottler Mausoleum

The Friends of Lone Fir (FOLF), the Lone Fir Cemetery Foundation (LFCF) and the Bottler family heirs are involved in a project to restore the Bottler Mausoleum. With an eye towards conversation of the degrading site, the FOLF recently requested that the building be taken down now and rebuilt with the same materials at a later time. After discussing the pros and cons of the situation, it was the Committee's opinion that the structure not be taken down until there is a plan in place that is funded and approved by the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office.

Asa Lovejoy memorial

The Metro cemeteries office has received a request by the FOLF to restore the Asa Lovejoy marker to its original state. There was discussion as to Metro's position; is it better to restore it exactly as it was, capture it as it currently exists, or do nothing at all with it.

There was strong sentiment that the marker belongs to the family of Asa Lovejoy, and to avoid possible legal action Metro should take the stance that no one else has a right to do anything to it, beyond assuring that it is kept structurally sound.

It was suggested that we look to some of the country's older states and see what they've learned in similar situations. Lone Fir Cemetery is on the National Heritage Registry, and there was question whether stones can ever be changed due to this designation.

The importance of marker production and installation control was emphasized, and that responsibilities regarding memorials needs to be clearly stated in the contract of sale.

Although the discussion was not conclusive, three factors for further consideration were noted:

1. Look for counsel from other historic cemeteries, ideally those on the Historic Registry.
2. First, do no harm.
3. Consider who is asking for the change.

The second Monday of the month seems to work well for committee members, and the rest of the 2014 meetings were set:

Monday, June 9, 2014 at 1 p.m.

Monday, September 8, 2014 at 1 p.m.

Monday, December 8, 2014 at 1 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30.