

Russellville Oakland Cemetery Commission Minutes

April 17, 2018

The Russellville Oakland Cemetery Commission met for the regular meeting on Tuesday, April 17, 2018, at 5:30 p.m. in the 1st Floor Conference Room.

Attending: Director Stephanie Warwick, City Attorney Trey Smith, Chairman/Commissioner David Lee, Vice Chairwoman/Commissioner Mindy Hudson, Commissioner/Secretary Rebecca Howell, Commissioner Cindy Hlass, Commissioner Patricia Petray, Commissioner Cecelia Slone, City Council Liaison Freddie Harris, City Council Liaison Phyllis Carruth, and Former City Council Liaison Eric Westcott

Absent: City Finance Director Jerry McKaughan, Mayor Randy Horton, and visitor Sean Ingram from The Courier

Chairman Lee called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and welcomed those in attendance.

Old Business:

The First Order of Business was to review and approve the minutes from the March 20, 2018, Cemetery Regular Meeting. The motion to approve the minutes was made by Vice Chairwoman Hudson and seconded by Commissioner Slone. The minutes were unanimously approved.

The Second Order of Business was a presentation of the Financial Report. City Attorney Smith reported that the Schwab account balance of \$142,958.53 was moved into a certificate of deposit in March. Liaison Carruth asked the reason for moving funds, and he explained that it would give more control and ability to withdraw the money without penalty. The Genworth Account balance was still \$95,514.20 at 3/31/18. Secretary Howell made a motion to approve the Financial Report as presented, it was seconded by Commissioner Slone, and it passed unanimously.

The Third Order of Business was not addressed. This had been planned as a time to open the floor to the public to address concerns/suggestions; however, there were no visitors in attendance.

The Fourth Order of Business was an update from the Planning Committee for the 2018 Decoration Day and 175th Anniversary of Oakland Cemetery. Director Warwick outlined the schedule of activities and sponsors for Saturday, May 5, and she read the press release draft. City of Russellville Parks and Recreation and Public Works Departments are helping with items such as picnic tables, a generator, and road barricades. IMC Studios will provide music, and Director Warwick requested approval for \$327.00. Vice Chairwoman Hudson made a motion to approve \$327.00 to hire IMC for music at our celebration. Commissioner Slone seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The Fifth Order of Business was a discussion of the Fee Schedule for the Memorial Garden Addition of Oakland Cemetery. This new section is located near the creek on the west side of the cemetery; already located here is the columbarium in a beautiful, tranquil setting. A new road is partly completed, but there are no traditional gravesites yet. The cost of these improvements has been about \$28,000.00. Approximately 452 traditional gravesites are projected to be situated here in the future; the estimated cost of the land before improvements is \$10.44 per plot.

The proposed new price for a grave is \$1,000.00, and only twenty (20) or so are likely to be sold per year. Sales of these new gravesites will be over some twenty-three (23) years or more. Former City Council Liaison Eric Westcott created the new fee schedule in order to keep more money for care/maintenance/mowing of Oakland Cemetery and send less money to the state of Arkansas for perpetual care. Should the City of Russellville face a financial crisis, our perpetual care is already a large amount, consisting of the new certificate of deposit (formerly Schwab) \$143,000.00 and Genworth Account \$95,000.00 (both rounded amounts).

The Russellville Oakland Cemetery Commission approved Mr. Westcott's proposed fee schedule at the December 2017 regular cemetery meeting, but then rescinded the decision at the March 2018 meeting, due to lingering concerns over raising the price of a grave from \$750.00 to \$1,000.00. The other issue in the minds of Commissioners was the structure of the \$1,000.00 price, because only \$50.00 was considered cost of land, whereas the current sales of plots in the older part of the cemetery have \$750.00 cost basis. In the new fee schedule, the cost basis may need to be increased to reflect both the \$28,000.00 completed improvements and the cost to finish the road into the new section. Director Warwick will work on a slightly revised fee structure.

In all, Mr. Westcott's proposal saves the cemetery about \$159,000.00 over the long-term future of the new section. Liaison Carruth asked why the Commission wouldn't be interested in saving \$159,000.00.

The Sixth Order of Business was planned as a discussion about shrubs for the west line of the cemetery (along the creek). This was tabled for the next meeting.

New Business:

There was no new business.

Vice Chairwoman Hudson made a motion to adjourn, Commissioner Slone seconded it, and the meeting was adjourned at about 6:40 p.m.