

Russellville Oakland Cemetery Commission Minutes

April 20, 2021

The Russellville Oakland Cemetery Commission met for the regular meeting on Tuesday, April 20, 2021, at 5:30 p.m. in the 1st Floor Conference Room.

Attending in Person: Director Stephanie Warwick, Chairperson/Commissioner Mindy Hudson, Vice-Chairperson/Commissioner Kenneth Startup, Commissioner/Secretary Rebecca Howell, Commissioner Mary Schwartz, City Council Liaison Phyllis Carruth and City Attorney Trey Smith

Attending by Phone: Commissioner Cindy Hlass

Absent: City Finance Director Robin Johnson, Mayor Richard Harris, Debi Headley from the Mayor's Office, and visitor Sean Ingram from The Courier

Chairperson Hudson opened the April 2021 Russellville Oakland Cemetery Regular Meeting 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 16, 2021, Cemetery Regular Meeting. The motion to approve the minutes was made by Vice-Chairperson Startup and seconded by Commissioner Schwartz. The minutes were unanimously approved.

The Second Order of Business was a presentation of the March 2021 Financial Report by Commissioner Schwartz and Director Warwick. Bank account balances at 3/31/2021 were Russellville Oakland Cemetery operating account \$104,046.29 and Bank OZK perpetual care trust account \$153,228.98. As a result of Bank OZK trust account being added to the Cemetery Balance Sheet, Commissioner Schwartz will explain the Appropriated and Unappropriated Fund Balances at a future meeting. Also, the Genworth account, the other perpetual care trust account, has an ending contract value of \$119,738.06 as of October 21, 2020, and Finance Director Johnson will discuss this account soon.

As noted on the Statement of Revenues and Expenditures, the largest expenditures for March were contract labor (mowing), grave openings, and cemetery improvements (new trees). A transfer of funds from the City is expected in the future and may be in the amount of \$100,000, which covers the cost of the Memorial Addition roadway. For the period January – March, expenditures exceeded revenues by \$11,465.17, but this will change once the City transfers funds. Chairperson Hudson thanked Commissioner Schwartz for walking us through the financials.

At this point in the meeting, Director Warwick suggested tabling the fence project.

The Third Order of Business was an open floor to the Public to address concerns/suggestions, and there were no visitors in attendance. Director Warwick said that there have been concerns from the public and others about the mowing and overall look of the cemetery grounds. City

Attorney Trey Smith joined the discussion for several minutes, while Commission members spent a considerable amount of time deciding what steps to take in the best interest of all parties.

Vice-Chairperson/Commissioner Startup made a motion to terminate the current contract, and this was seconded by City Council Liaison Carruth. The motion passed unanimously. Then the conversation turned to what to do in the interim period, as about three (3) or four (4) mowing services are needed at this time of year. While there is a 30-day end of contract, two lawn care professionals, as well as Public Works, have offered their services, and Commission members discussed whether to waive the bidding period or to let the bidding process begin. Director Warwick said that the normal bid process was faster.

Commissioner Schwarz made a motion to open for bid the grounds-maintenance contract, and Vice-Chair Startup seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. City Attorney Smith addressed questions from Commissioners about liability, insurance, and fairness to other bidders, given that one of the interim lawn care professionals wishes to mow once for free. Mr. Smith found no legal issue with the particular company, and they will be providing a public service to the City. Director Warwick read points of the grounds-maintenance contract.

Commissioner Schwarz made a motion, for the 30-day interim period, to allow opening bids, to take Donny Turney (River Valley Tree Service) up on his offer of a one-time gift of mowing/trimming/labor, and to allow discretion to Director Warwick, as more mowing is needed, before the bid process is completed. Secretary Howell seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

The Fourth Order of Business was an update concerning the roadway for the Memorial Addition. Director Warwick reported that a Pre-Bid meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 22, 2021, at 11:00 a.m. People are placing bids, and Commissioners have seen the schematics.

New Business:

The First Order of New Business was a discussion and approval for a May 2021 Decoration Day or Decoration Month for the cemetery. Topics include but are not limited to clean up projects, information center, and guided or self-guided tours. Director Warwick has received four calls about Decoration Day. Chairperson Hudson made a motion to let the public know that all of May will be a come and go Decoration Month. Also, on Sunday, May 9, between 1:00 and 4:00 p.m., Cemetery staff and the Commissioners will take turns at the cemetery helping visitors with any questions or concerns they may have. Vice-Chair Startup seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously. The main day for cleanup and repair is planned for a date in October 2021.

Chairperson Hudson expressed her appreciation to everyone for their input and participation, and adjourned the meeting at about 6:45 p.m.