



**CITY OF SANDUSKY, OHIO**

240 Columbus Avenue

Sandusky, Ohio 44870

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE  
SANDUSKY CEMETERY BOARD  
COMMISSION CHAMBERS  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22, 2023 AT 4:00 P.M.**

**PRESENT:**

Members: Kara Groff, Bret Ninke, Harrison Smith, Steve Toft, and Kevin Zeiher. Dennis Murray, Sr. and Deb Voltz were absent.

Assistant Law Director, Sarah Chiappone, City Treasurer, Michelle Reeder, Cemetery Superintendent, Scott Kromer, and Clerk, Elisabeth Sowecke.

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 P.M. by Kevin Zeiher as acting Chair.

**MINUTES OF THE  
PREVIOUS MEETING:**

The minutes of the April 27, 2022, meeting were approved on a motion made by Steve Toft, seconded by Harrison Smith. Motion carried.

**SELECTION OF CHAIR  
& VICE-CHAIR:**

It was acknowledged that long-time chairman and member, Reverend Thomas Darden was selected to serve on the ADA/Fair Housing Board and has accepted that appointment. Mr. Zeiher opened the board for nominations for Chair and Vice-Chair. Mr. Toft nominated Mr. Smith who respectfully declined. Mr. Ninke nominated Mr. Zeiher, who accepted, seconded by Mr. Smith. Acknowledging newer members, and that the cemetery is a great place to serve, Chairman Zeiher nominated Ms. Groff for Vice-Chair, who accepted. Mr. Smith motioned to close, and Mr. Ninke seconded. Motion carried.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:**

Finance Director Michelle Reeder submitted the Oakland Cemetery Financial Report for 2022 and reviewed the various line items.

Expenditures did increase, with the largest increases occurring were contractual services and materials. Ms. Reeder noted that costs of goods and services have increased, as well as that due to expectations of the Board, additional small maintenance projects were completed. As of 2023, nothing is out of line for the budget in 2023 so far. Chairman Zeiher inquired whether additional donations have been made to any endowment funds. Ms. Reeder acknowledged that none have been made recently to her knowledge. Challenges with eliminating endowments were discussed. Mr. Kromer indicated that each family mausoleum has different terms for general maintenance and repair, and current staff is reviewing documents that specify those terms. Staff have performed various repairs in the past year that had been lingering for some time. Chairman Zeiher inquired about sources of donations to the Veterans endowment, and Ms. Reeder indicated that she would need to access the original documents for further information. Mr. Smith moved to have the report placed on file, and if anyone had questions, they could contact Ms. Reeder. Mr. Toft seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

Mr. Kromer announced that a second new columbaria of niches had been installed at the cemetery to compliment the one installed in 2021. With the sale of single and double niches, the new columbaria will make \$50,000 to \$70,000 in sales. There are just a few niches left in the older Ridgeview Columbaria, as well as the in the Chapel and the Garden Mausoleum. Most available crypts are located in the upper rows.

According to Commissioner Harris's request, in-house Streets staff resurfaced various areas near the entrance, house and shop (approx. 700 linear feet). Staff hope to do the same in 2023 toward the back entrance, including widening the veterans circle just off the rear entrance.

Additionally, staff cleaned-up the staging area behind the shop; some items were moved to ridge and partitioned. Asphalt grindings were added behind the shop and a new catch basin was installed to improve drainage.

Security cameras were added to the house near the entrance to the cemetery as well as behind the shop.

Chairman Zeiher questioned whether staff were considering putting someone in the house, especially at night, and Mr. Kromer indicated all options are on the table but uncertain at this time.

Mr. Smith asked for an update regarding the person who requested to install a big stone on the grave, and Mr. Kromer indicated that

they are working with a monument company to have the marker made according to the cemetery Rules & Regulations. Mr. Kromer indicated that staff were ultimately looking out for the best interests of the family, out of concern that the original design would be susceptible to damage from equipment used to perform regular operations.

Mr. Kromer clarified that staff assist with installation of flush markers, but all upright monuments are installed by the monument makers.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Mr. Kromer presented a few changes to the Rules & Regulations that have not been updated since 2006. Mr. Zeiher acknowledged that the recovery of unused spaces has been extended from 25 to 50 years. Mr. Kromer summarized the process staff would follow to recover unused spaces for resale. Mr. Smith indicated that he purchased spaces 55 years ago, and expressed his concern that once a space is purchased the cemetery should not be able to take it back. Mr. Kromer indicated that we have had family inquire about purchasing unused spaces, which have been unoccupied for nearly 70 years, near their loved ones. According to office records, when purchasing space at the cemetery in the 1950s, families were sold an entire lot, and the choice to buy an individual space was not available.

The changes made to Section 14 of the existing rules and regulations were actually to extend the period of time from 25 to 50 years, and to specify a suitable legal process for addressing requests to purchase unused spaces. This will allow the cemetery to remain sympathetic to families who purchased spaces well in-advance, as well as to families who wish to purchase spaces near their loved ones at the current market value.

Ms. Groff questioned if the updated rules will comply with current Ohio Revised Code, and Ms. Chiappone indicated that she conducted extensive research to align the rules and regulations with other municipalities.

Chairman Zeiher questioned whether patrons ever inquire about selling back spaces, and Mr. Kromer indicated that we do handle those inquiries and patrons can transfer burial rights back to the cemetery for the value of the original purchase minus an administrative fee.

Mr. Smith motioned to accept all proposed changes as they were written, seconded by Mr. Toft. The motion carried.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business to come before the Board, and upon motion by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Toft, the meeting was adjourned at 4:34 P.M.

The next meeting of the Sandusky Cemetery Board is scheduled for **Wednesday, September 27, 2023, at 3:00 P.M.**, in Commission Chambers, City Hall, unless other arrangements are announced.