

City of Fort Lauderdale

*City Hall
100 North Andrews Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301
www.fortlauderdale.gov*



Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 21, 2020

12:00 PM

Joint Workshop with Cemetery System Board of Trustees

City Commission Conference Room

CITY COMMISSION WORKSHOP

FORT LAUDERDALE CITY COMMISSION

DEAN J. TRANTALIS Mayor

ROBERT L. McKINZIE Vice Mayor - Commissioner - District III

HEATHER MORAITIS Commissioner - District I

STEVEN GLASSMAN Commissioner - District II

BEN SORENSEN Commissioner - District IV

CHRIS LAGERBLOOM, City Manager

JOHN HERBST, City Auditor

JEFFREY A. MODARELLI, City Clerk

ALAIN E. BOILEAU, City Attorney

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Trantalis called the workshop meeting to order at 12:17 p.m.

INTRODUCTIONS

Commission Members Present: Commissioner Heather Moraitis, Commissioner Steven Glassman, Vice Mayor Robert L. McKinzie, Commissioner Ben Sorensen and Mayor Dean J. Trantalis

Cemetery Board of Trustees Members Present: Chair Dennis Ulmer, Vice Chair Frederick H. Nesbitt, Paul Gitnik, Pamela Beasley-Pittman, Richard Kurtz, Michael Watson, Lawrence Wechsler and Patricia Zeiler

Cemetery Board of Trustees Members Not Present: Richard Kurtz, John Lilli and Michael Watson

QUORUM ESTABLISHED

Also Present: City Manager Chris Lagerbloom, Deputy City Manager Rob Hernandez, City Clerk Jeffrey A. Modarelli, City Attorney Alain E. Boileau, City Auditor John Herbst, Cemetery Administrator and Cemetery Board of Trustees Liaison Stacy Spates and Sergeant at Arms Luan Malushi

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

[20-0115](#)

Discussion - Cemetery Masterplan Project Prioritization - (Commission Districts 1, 2, 3 and 4)

Cemetery Board of Trustees (Board) Chair Dennis Ulmer reviewed details of the City's four (4) cemeteries: *Historic Woodlawn Cemetery*; *Historic Evergreen Cemetery*; *Lauderdale Memorial Park*; and *Sunset Memorial Gardens* (Cemeteries). He commented on the role and responsibilities of the Board and future opportunities at the direction of the Commission. Chair Ulmer commented on historical details related to the formerly private Historic Woodlawn Cemetery (Woodlawn). The City acquired management responsibility for Woodlawn in 2002. Woodlawn was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2017 and is the resting place of African-American pioneer residents. Woodlawn is

currently closed for burials.

Chair Ulmer discussed adding cremation niches to Woodlawn. Vice Mayor McKinzie commented on his perspective regarding the Historic Wall at Woodlawn and the opportunity to add cremation niches. Board Member Paul Gitnik expounded on this topic and related opportunities. Board Member Pamela Beasley-Pittman concurred with Board Member Gitnik's comments, noting the increasing trend towards cremation services and the opportunity Woodlawn's Historic Wall provides for memorializing all those interned at Woodlawn.

Vice Mayor McKinzie commented on parking at Woodlawn. Chair Ulmer confirmed the need to address parking concerns. Further comment ensued on future opportunities to purchase land adjacent to Woodlawn. Mayor Trantalis suggested the Board return to the Commission with recommendations.

In response to Commissioner Sorensen's question regarding adequately capturing the historical significance of Woodlawn, Vice Mayor McKinzie confirmed, explaining related details and noting it was mirrored after Evergreen Cemetery (Evergreen). Board Member Pat Zeiler commented on historical details.

Chair Ulmer discussed the management history of all four (4) City-owned Cemeteries, expounding on details, confirming the City now manages all four (4) Cemeteries. He updated the Commission on challenges moving forward, noting the need to address the Cemetery Master Plan priorities that include providing optimum customer service experience.

Chair Ulmer requested Commission assistance regarding the Request for Proposal (RFP) for cemetery management software, commenting on existing procedures and noting the critical nature of this request. Stacy Spates, Cemetery Administrator and Cemetery Board of Trustees Liaison, explained that Staff is awaiting a non-disclosure agreement (NDA), expounding on related details. Mayor Trantalis confirmed the critical nature of this request. Ms. Spates confirmed.

In response to Vice Mayor McKinzie's question regarding the City's anticipated Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) System impacting cemetery management software, City Manager Lagerbloom said there would be no correlation. Further comment ensued.

Vice Mayor McKinzie discussed Staff's management of the Cemeteries and interaction with funeral directors. He recommended adequate Staff and resources to facilitate all cemetery funeral service needs moving

forward. Further comment ensued.

City Attorney Alain Boileau expounded on details regarding the ability of the City to offer all services provided by the previous vendor, Carriage Services, Inc. (Carriage) due to licensing requirements for specific items such as cremation services. Providing these services will require contracting out to a third party.

Board Member Gitnik concurred with the critical need for cemetery management software, stating it is a basic tool. He commented on the opportunity for Cemeteries to become a future revenue stream if properly managed.

Mayor Trantalis commented on his perspective regarding the health of the Cemetery Fund and providing burial services to residents at cost. Further comment and discussion ensued on the Perpetual Care Fund, cemetery services, maintenance costs and management.

Board Member Gitnik discussed his perspective regarding cemetery perpetual care funds and the ability for the Cemeteries to be self-supporting while providing reduced burial costs to residents. Further comment and discussion ensued on managing for-profit and non-profit cemetery perpetual care funds.

Board Member Gitnik noted that those managing for-profit cemetery funds are investment managers. He commented on having an actuarial study to determine the cost of maintaining a cemetery in a steady-state. He confirmed the need to keep the Perpetual Care Fund as robust as possible.

City Auditor Herbst expounded on his perspective, stating that State Statute does not require contributions to a city-owned cemetery perpetual care fund. The City contributes double what State Statute requires of private operators of cemeteries. He discussed details regarding the City's contribution to the Cemetery Perpetual Care Fund, the Cemetery Master Plan, the long-term stability of the City for cemetery management into the future and opportunities for additional revenue that could be used to provide additional customer services. City Auditor Herbst commented on the eighty-one percent (81%) revenue previously received by Carriage and the ability of the City to now utilize those funds for possible expansion of the Cemetery System.

Vice Chair Fred Nesbitt noted Evergreen and Sunset Memorial Gardens are projected to reach capacity by 2023. Lauderdale Memorial Gardens is projected to reach capacity by 2044. The Master Plan has put forth

ideas to provide additional internment with mausoleums, adding to and growing the Perpetual Care Fund. He noted the opportunity provided by mausoleums, including lower maintenance costs versus land areas. Vice Chair Nesbitt confirmed receipt of proposals for mausoleums in addition to other items in the Cemetery Master Plan, including possible acquisition of land adjacent to the Cemeteries.

In response to Vice Mayor McKinzie's question regarding the cost of purchasing space in mausoleums versus a burial plot, Ms. Spates explained current pricing, and details and concerns related to availability. The lowest price point for in-ground plot is \$1,871.25 for residents and \$2,495 for non-residents. The lowest price for burial in a mausoleum is approximately \$6,000 for a non-resident with an approximate twenty-five percent (25%) reduction for residents. Ms. Spates said that there are no mausoleums available at Fort Lauderdale Memorial Park due to the purchase of all available inventory, confirming current inventories at the other Cemeteries.

Board Member Gitnik commented on recent industry trends, including the demand for mausoleums for cremation. He expounded on cost details regarding internment, entombment and additional ancillary costs. Board Member Gitnik confirmed the ability to provide a spreadsheet listing all expenses. He recommended that the City be the most affordable option in the marketplace to provide the best value.

Chair Ulmer confirmed the need for additional mausoleum space and an understanding regarding allowable expenses from the Cemetery Trust Fund.

In response to Mayor Trantalis' question, City Attorney Boileau confirmed that the building of a mausoleum fits the definition of a capital improvement cost, expounding on related details.

Chair Ulmer noted input from City Auditor Herbst regarding updates to the Ordinance revenue percentages that would impact the ability to finance capital costs for new mausoleum construction. He requested Commission direction moving forward on Board recommendations.

Vice Chair Nesbitt discussed mausoleum options moving forward and limitations, i.e., sales could not occur until mausoleum construction is close to completion. Additional ways to finance construction were discussed. Vice Chair Nesbitt pointed out that revenue sales would significantly exceed mausoleum building costs.

In response to Mayor Trantalis' question, Vice Chair Nesbitt confirmed

the following Board recommendations: 1) initiating the Customer Care Experience that includes a website, graphic signage, a database, etc.; 2) proceeding with plans to build three (3) mausoleums, one (1) at Lauderdale Memorial Park and two (2) smaller in size at Sunset Memorial Gardens); and 3) hiring of a Project Manager to assist in prioritizing and implementing the mausoleum projects. Comment and discussion ensued on mausoleums and funding the Board's recommendations.

In response to Mayor Trantalis' questions regarding the use of Perpetual Funds for the Board's recommendations, City Attorney Boileau confirmed he would review with City Manager Lagerbloom and advise. Vice Chair Nesbitt noted the list of additional items the Board would like to implement.

In response to Commissioner Glassman's question regarding the mausoleum costs listed in Exhibit I, Board Member Gitnik explained that the size of the mausoleums listed correlate to cost differences. The mausoleum at Lauderdale Memorial Park would have 500 spaces and the two (2) mausoleums at Sunset Memorial Gardens would have 600 spaces, according to the Cemetery Master Plan. Discussions ensued on the different interment types at Lauderdale Memorial Park and Sunset Memorial Gardens. Commissioner Glassman requested additional details regarding the breakdown of costs in Exhibit I.

Chair Ulmer requested Commission feedback regarding the Board's recommendation for the Customer Care Experience, an RFP for irrigation at Sunset Memorial Gardens, building of the mausoleums discussed and hiring a Project Manager for those projects.

Vice Chair Nesbitt said that if the Commission approves building the requested mausoleums, the Board will return to the Commission with specific detailed information.

In response to Vice Mayor McKinzie's question regarding available inventory at the Cemeteries, Ms. Spates noted the current inventory levels at Sunset Memorial Gardens, Lauderdale Memorial Park, and Historic Evergreen Cemetery.

Mayor Trantalis confirmed a Consensus to move forward and acquire the requested software and enhancements to maintain the inventory which would add to the customer care aspect of the Cemeteries; the building of the three (3) mausoleums; acquiring contiguous land; expansion of cremains; and the Historical Wall at Woodlawn for cremains.

Vice Chair Nesbitt noted the limited amount of land available for acquisition to provide various burial options. Vice Mayor McKinzie commented on the land given to the Broward County Housing Authority for affordable housing. Further comment ensued on finding land adjacent to existing cemeteries.

City Auditor Herbst discussed alternatives regarding the process for land acquisition, recommending the Board utilize existing City Real Estate Staff.

In response to Commissioner Sorensen's question, City Auditor Herbst confirmed the current value of the Cemetery Trust Fund is approximately \$30,500,000.

Board Member Gitnik commented on the Cemetery Master Plan option to create a memorial wall for individuals who select burial at sea or the scattering of cremation ashes at sea.

Chair Ulmer acknowledged and thanked City Auditor Herbst for the assistance he provided to the Board.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Trantalis adjourned the meeting at 1:13 p.m.