



CITY OF ELOY

PUBLIC NOTICE
ELOY CEMETERY COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday, March 21, 2022
5:30 PM
City Council Chambers
595 North C Street
Eloy, Arizona 85131

AGENDA

I. Call to Order

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Roll Call

IV. Appearances from the Floor

Individuals wishing to **ADDRESS THE COMMITTEE** may do so by signing in on a form provided by the Committee Secretary, identifying the topic(s) or agenda item(s). **ACTION** taken as a result of public comment regarding non agenda items will be limited to directing staff to study the matter or rescheduling the matter for further consideration and decision at a later date. During an open session, the Committee shall not hear personal complaints against City personnel or a person connected with the City. **TIME LIMIT FOR SPEAKERS WILL BE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON.**

V. Director's Report:

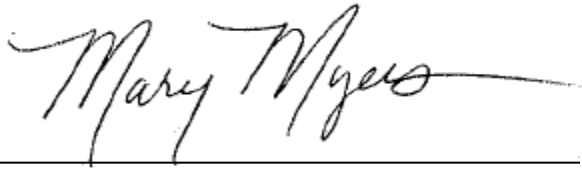
- A. Burials and Work Orders
Cemetery Maintenance
Update on Opening of New Section

VI. Business: Possible Discussion and/or Action on the Following:

- A. Approval of Minutes: January 5, 2022
- B. Discussion on current cemetery rules as it pertains to the preparation and consumption of food at Eloy Memorial Park.

VII. Adjournment

POSTED BY WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2022, BY 5:00 P.M. AT ELOY CITY HALL, ELOY POST OFFICE, TROY THOMAS COMMUNITY CENTER, TOLTEC COMMUNITY/SENIOR CENTER AND CITY WEBSITE: www.elayaz.gov



Mary Myers, MMC, CPM
City Clerk

INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS MAY CONTACT LORENA LaSALDE-RIOS, ADA COORDINATOR FOR THE CITY OF ELOY AT 520-466-9201 OR 520-466-7455 (TDD). IF POSSIBLE, SUCH REQUESTS SHOULD BE MADE 72 HOURS IN ADVANCE. ONE OR MORE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE AND/OR STAFF MAY PARTICIPATE BY TELEPHONIC OR VIDEO MEANS.

**MINUTES OF
THE ELOY CEMETERY COMMITTEE
CITY OF ELOY
595 NORTH C STREET
ELOY, ARIZONA 85131
JANUARY 5, 2022
5:30 P.M.**

Staff Present: Paul Anchondo-Community Services Director; Mary Myers-Committee Secretary; Jerry Calvillo-Parks Superintendent; Michael Legate-Parks Maintenance Crew Leader

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Micah Powell called the meeting to order at approximately 5:32 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Powell led the Committee and the public in the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. ROLL CALL

Committee Members Present: Micah Powell-Chairman; Natasha Tidwell-Vice Chair; Steven Paulson-Member; Mary Lou Martinez-Member; Sylvia Guanajuato Rodriguez-Member; Andrew Rodriguez-Member

Committee Members Absent: Ana Maria Valadez-Member

IV. APPEARANCES FROM THE FLOOR

None

V. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Anchondo conveyed the following communications to the committee:

A. Burials and Work Orders

Since the last board meeting (9/29/21), the cemetery staff has conducted 33 burials; set 14 headstones; poured 21 foundations and processed 15 miscellaneous work

orders. Mr. Anchondo said for the 2021 year, the department had a total of 107 burials, 62 headstones settings, 112 foundation pours and 103 miscellaneous work orders.

Chairman Powell wanted to know if the 107 burials in 2021 considered average or higher than normal.

Mr. Anchondo said he believes that it's slightly higher than normal.

Member Rodriguez asked has there been any issues with funeral parties arriving inside the park after the 3:30 p.m. cutoff time.

Mr. Anchondo conveyed there has been a couple of instances where there was some concerns that the families would not make it inside the park on time, but did just at the cutoff time. He said this is not an issue that his staff has to deal with often.

Cemetery Maintenance

Starting January 31, 2022, park staff will begin removing holiday decorations and flowers found to be in violation of the cemetery rules and regulations. A notice was published in the newspaper and posted on city social media pages.

Wreaths Across America

The second annual Wreaths Across American event was held at the cemetery on December 18, 2021. With the assistance of city staff and volunteers, over 400 wreaths were laid at the gravesites of veterans. Mr. Anchondo noted that Chairman Powell attended the event.

Chairman Powell said turnout for the event was amazing. He said it was very emotional and touching seeing all the wreaths on the veterans graves. Chairman Powell congratulated city staff for doing such an amazing job preparing the cemetery for the event.

VI. BUSINESS: Possible Discussion and/or Action on the Following:

A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: September 29, 2021

Chairman Powell asked the Committee if there were any corrections or changes to the minutes.

There being no comments, questions or corrections, Chairman Powell called for a motion to approve.

Motion by Member Rodriguez, seconded by Member Paulson, to approve the September 29, 2021 meeting minutes as presented, passed unanimously (6-0).

B. APPOINTMENT OF A CHAIRPERSON FOR 2022

Chairman Powell conveyed that per city code, the committee is required to appoint a chairperson at its first meeting each calendar year.

Chairman Powell opened the floor for nominations.

Vice Chair Tidwell nominated Micah Powell to continue as Chair for 2022.

There being no further nominations, Chairman Powell closed nominations.

Motion by Vice Chair Tidwell, seconded by Member Paulson to reappoint Micah Powell as Chairperson for 2022, passed unanimously (6-0).

C. APPOINTMENT OF A VICE CHAIRPERSON FOR 2022

Chairman Powell conveyed that appointment of a Vice-Chairperson is also required at the first meeting each calendar year, per city code.

Chairman Powell opened the floor for nominations.

Chairman Powell nominated Natasha Tidwell to continue as Vice Chair for 2022.

There being no further nominations, Chairman Powell closed nominations.

Motion by Chairman Powell and seconded by Member Paulson to reappoint Natasha Tidwell as Vice Chairperson for 2022, passed unanimously (6-0).

D. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO ENFORCE CEMETERY RULES AND REGULATIONS PERTAINING TO THE OPENING AND CLOSING OF ELOY MEMORIAL PARK

Chairman Powell conveyed that it was brought to his attention and posted on social media, that some visitors of the cemetery are disrespecting the graves of loved ones at the park by driving their vehicles on top of graves which is despicable. He was very upset that people are doing this continuously and feels that the city has no other choice than to start closing the gates into the park at night. Chairman Powell said the cemetery is a place for people to come pay their respects to loved ones. He asked that

this item be placed on tonight's agenda for discussion and possible action from the committee.

Member Paulson asked Chairman Powell if the incident was an accident or deliberate.

Chairman Powell said it was deliberate and posted on social media. The first picture was of an individual who appeared to be cleaning their loved one's headstone. The second posting was of a band and a truck with speakers parked on top of several graves located behind their loved one's grave.

Member Paulson agreed that maybe closing the gates would deter people from doing this. He suggested the city post the announcement on its social media sites.

Member Guanajuato Rodriguez conveyed there is also poor lighting at the cemetery during the evening hours. She said anyone who goes out there at night can accidentally run into a headstone. She said people also go out there at night to drink and party, leaving beer bottles behind. Member Guanajuato Rodriguez said she supports closing the gate.

Member Guanajuato Rodriguez conveyed that during the All Saints Day event last November, there was a car accident inside the park. She said there were so many people at the event; people and cars were all over the place. Member Guanajuato Rodriguez stated that she would like to have some kind of traffic control in place for future events.

Member Rodriguez stated that St. Helen's church, who sponsors the event, should work with city staff to control the traffic to prevent people from parking all over the place and jamming the roadways. He said he attended the event; there was easily over 300 people scattered throughout the cemetery that day. Member Rodriguez conveyed that as far as the vandalism at the cemetery, he said it is not something that just starting happening. He said this has been going on since he was in high school. Member Rodriguez said he is also in support of closing the gates.

Member Guanajuato Rodriguez wanted to know who would be in charge of closing the gates. She suggested having the police department close the gates at night.

Mr. Anchondo conveyed that if it is the consensus of the committee to close the cemetery gates, he will meet with the city manager to discuss possibly utilizing the assistance of the police department with the nightly closing of the gates. He said in all likely, it would be a shared responsibility. Mr. Anchondo asked the committee to give him a couple of weeks to work out the logistics.

Chairman Powell said if the gates are going to be closed from sunset to sunrise, ample notice must be given to the public.

Member Paulson asked what type of lighting does the cemetery grounds currently have.

Chairman Powell said there are no lights at the cemetery.

Member Paulson wanted to know could motion detector lights be installed at the park to detract poor behavior.

Mr. Anchondo pointed out that the rules of the cemetery specify that the hours of the cemetery are sunrise to sunset. He said it has not been the practice to closed the gates for the past 13 to 14 years. Mr. Anchondo said at one time the gates were being shut, but someone chained and ripped them off the hinges. He said the park will likely experience some vandalism along the way as they re-educate the public.

Member Guanajuato Rodriguez suggested installing deer cameras in areas where vandalism is known to take place.

Mr. Anchondo said Mr. Calvillo is also looking into automatic gate closing mechanisms for the cemetery. He knows this can be costly, but if something like this can actually be installed in the future, Mr. Anchondo said there wouldn't be a need to assign anyone to open and close the gates.

Chairman Powell wanted to know what can be done if someone is caught and the person is identified. He said people will still drive on top of graves during the day. What can be done if someone posts a picture on social media?

Mr. Anchondo conveyed that the rules can be amended at a future meeting making it a violation and punishable to drive in specific areas within the cemetery, with the exception of authorized personnel.

Member Martinez wanted to address Member Rodriguez's comment about St. Helen's church. She said she was part of event put on by the church. Member Martinez said they could not get in the park to set up because there were so many people out there with food and playing music. Member Martinez said the church set up chairs and directed people to park on the side and not block the roadway. She said information needs to be put out to the public letting them know that the cemetery is not a place for partying. A permit should be required if someone wants to have food and music in the park. Member Martinez said she goes often to the cemetery and there are people out there with food and blasting music. She said kids are running

around with sparklers and paper cones. She's threatened to call the police for fear they would start a fire at cemetery. Member Martinez reiterated that the public needs to be notified that a permit is needed for things like this. And if they are caught violating any of the park rules, they will be prosecuted. She said locking the gates at night is good, but if someone wants to get in they will.

Member Guanajuato Rodriguez said she would like to talk about food at the park.

Chairman Powell said the committee cannot talk about it because it is not on the agenda. He recommended discussing it at the next meeting.

Member Rodriguez recalled the time when Mr. Jose Garcia and Member Guanajuato Rodriguez had an incident at the cemetery where a man pulled a knife on Mr. Garcia. They called Eloy police department who referred them to Pinal County Sheriff, who referred them back to Eloy police. Member Rodriguez said Eloy police finally took the call. He said before any kind of policy is put in place, the committee needs to know which law enforcement agency is going to respond to calls.

Chairman Powell said he recalls former city manager, Ruth Osuna saying that there is a "gentlemen's agreement" for Eloy to respond to the calls.

Mr. Anchondo said he would talk to the city manager and the police chief about this. He said if one is not in place, he may be able establish such an agreement between the county and Eloy police. Mr. Anchondo conveyed that if the committee moves forward with a decision tonight to close the gates, he asked the committee to include the exception of city approved special events. He said this way, if a special event comes up, the staff would have the authority to keep the gates unlocked.

Chairman Powell said a permit should be required from the city to hold such an event.

Mr. Anchondo said the city issues permits for special events already. As mentioned by Member Martinez, Mr. Anchondo pointed out that the difficult part for staff, in particular for All Souls Day, is that although St. Helen's is issued a special event permit, there are others who also celebrate the holiday. He said there are a number of people in the park on that day who are not associated with the church, which makes it difficult for the church to police.

It was at this time that Chairman Powell allowed for public comment.

Mr. J.W. Tidwell conveyed that the first thing is to determine if the cemetery is in the county or the city limits. He does not believe the county is going to send one of its deputies out because there is a loud party in the cemetery. Whereas, if it is in the city,

you are more likely to get a police officer out there. Mr. Tidwell suggested revising the cemetery policy to address the issue of parties that are going on in the park. He pointed out that when he served on the board, this was not an issue. Mr. Tidwell said the committee can prohibit food and music in the park, except one day a year - November 1st.

Member Guanajuato Rodriguez asked Mr. Legate for his comments about closing the gates.

Mr. Legate conveyed that if staff is going to be responsible for opening and closing the gates, he is concerned about possible altercations they may encounter with visitors not wanting to leave the park. This is a big concern for him. He said if a police officer closes the gate, visitors will leave with confrontation. Mr. Legate pointed out that people also bring grills out to the cemetery all the time. They bring them out and start grilling when the staff leaves. Mr. Legate told the committee that opening the gates at sunrise would not be a problem; closing the gates at sunset is where he believes the city may run into problems with the public. He said he has called the police multiple times for a number of things. Mr. Legate said it is not staff's job to be bodyguards or break up fights at the cemetery. He agreed with Mr. Tidwell's comment that it needs to be determined who will respond to calls – Eloy police or the county.

Member Guanajuato Rodriguez also agreed that city staff should not have to deal with confrontational situations. She said this is why she suggested an agency should be responsible.

Mr. Anchondo told the committee that this is an effort to try to deter violations and vandalism, but like at all of the city's parks, nothing is foolproof. He said this is something he and his staff deals with at every city park. Mr. Anchondo conveyed that closing the gates will hopefully help deter things in the future.

Chairman Powell said changing behavior is not going to happen overnight, but if the committee stays committed to this, then the behavior will break, hopefully.

Member Paulson agreed that it is not going to change overnight, but the committee needs to show that they are doing something. He said Eloy is Eloy – it has gotten this way over a period of time, and will improve in time. Member Paulson found it absolutely appalling that people believes that it is okay to go to a cemetery to party and drink alcohol.

Member Guanajuato Rodriguez said she wants the committee to come up with a good plan for execution because they are going to receive some backlash from the public.

Chairman Powell said he believes the public will appreciate what the committee is doing. The ones who will complain are probably the ones who are committing the violations.

Member Paulson said first and foremost, the committee needs to determine who is going to enforce it because it is not the responsibility of the city staff. He said the committee needs to figure which agency is going to respond in a timely manner.

Chairman Powell said that he and Mr. Anchondo will work on this.

There being no further comments, Chairman Powell asked the committee for direction.

A motion was made by Chairman Powell, and seconded by Vice Chair Tidwell to close the cemetery gates at the Eloy Memorial Park from sunset to sunrise, effective March 1, 2022, with the exception of special events with approved city issued permits, passed unanimously by roll call vote (6-0).

Member Martinez asked about the lighting for the cemetery.

Chairman Powell conveyed that the lighting would be a capital improvement plan (CIP) project through the city council.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Powell adjourned the meeting at approximately 6:16 p.m.

Micah Powell, Chairman

ATTEST:

Mary Myers, Committee Secretary