

**MINUTES OF
THE ELOY CEMETERY COMMITTEE
CITY OF ELOY
595 NORTH C STREET
ELOY, ARIZONA 85131
MARCH 21, 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 5:30 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; Ana Maria Valadez-Member

Committee Members Absent: Andrew Rodriguez-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 (1/5/22), the cemetery staff has conducted 25 burials; set 3 headstones; poured 17 foundations and processed 33 miscellaneous work orders.

Cemetery Maintenance

Staff has begun watering at the cemetery as of last Friday. Mr. Anchondo reminded the Committee that watering will cause some graves to sink. He said the staff will keep an active eye on this and attempt to address these issues as they arise. If the Committee receives complaints, he asked them to please remember that the ground has to dry before staff can bring in equipment to backfill the graves as the ground will be saturated.

Mr. Anchondo conveyed that the gates are being closed as of March 1, 2022. He said there has not been any issues so far due to the assistance of the police department and Vice Chair Tidwell and Mr. J.W. Tidwell. Mr. Anchondo said the police department closes the gates around 7:00 p.m. each night, but can change depending on the department's calls for service. He said city staff opens the gates in the mornings, Monday through Friday and Vice Chair Tidwell has been kind enough to open the cemetery gates on the weekends.

Chairman Powell thanked Vice Chair Tidwell and Mr. Tidwell for volunteering their time to close the gates on weekends.

Mr. Anchondo conveyed that he and Mr. Calvillo have met with the city's IT staff about video surveillance at the cemetery. He said this is something that he might be able to accomplish sometime in the near future. Mr. Anchondo said he would be meeting with IT staff again in the next couple of weeks.

Update on Opening of New Section

Mr. Anchondo said he has been working with EDA Land Planning, a landscape architect company on the opening of a new burial section at the cemetery. The new burial section will be Section E, located on the northwest side of the cemetery and will have approximately 930 spaces. He said EDA would provide a survey of the site, lay out burial plots, and construction drawing. Mr. Anchondo said he anticipates receiving the first draft of the construction drawing next week, which he and Mr. Calvillo will review and return with comments, and hopefully finalize within two weeks.

Chairman Powell asked would the final construction drawing come before the Cemetery Committee or the City Council for approval.

Mr. Anchondo told Chairman Powell no, unless he directs him to bring it to the Committee. He said the new section would “mirror” the section on the other side. Mr. Anchondo said once he receives the construction documents, he will meet with his staff to determine how much of the work can be accomplished in-house.

Chairman Powell wanted to know would trees be planted in the new section.

Mr. Anchondo said yes. Cypress trees would be planted around the perimeter of the new section similar to other sections.

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

A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: January 5, 2022

Chairman Powell asked the Committee if there were any questions, comments or corrections to the minutes.

Vice Chair Tidwell pointed out two corrections to the minutes:

- Page 7, 3rd paragraph reads: “He said if a police officer closes the gate, visitors will leave *with* confrontation.” The correct word is “without.”
- Page 7, last paragraph reads: “Member Paulson found it absolutely appalling that people *believes*...” The correct word is “believe.”

Mrs. Myers noted the corrections for the record.

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

Motion by Member Guanajuato Rodriguez, seconded by Member Paulson, to approve the January 5, 2022, meeting minutes with the corrections as noted, passed unanimously (6-0).

B. DISCUSSION ON CURRENT CEMETERY RULES AS IT PERTAINS TO THE PREPARATION AND CONSUMPTION OF FOOD AT ELOY MEMORIAL PARK.

Mr. Anchondo conveyed that Member Guanajuato Rodriguez requested this item placed on tonight’s agenda for discussion. He reminded the Committee that current cemetery rules allows for prepackage and precooked food to be consumed on cemetery grounds.

Councilmember Guanajuato Rodriguez conveyed that she is focused on event days such as "All Souls Day." She said she would like the Committee to make an exception on this day to allow families to use propane or gas grills at the cemetery.

Chairman Powell conveyed that the problem in the past was that people were bringing grills and cooking on cemetery grounds. He said the Committee may want to consider allowing grilling in a designated area. Chairman Powell pointed out that if it is allowed for All Souls Day, then it has to be allowed for all other events at the cemetery.

Mr. Anchondo wanted to let the Committee know that it is not staff's favorite thing to do when it comes to enforcing the rules, however, is open to moving forward at the direction of the Committee. Mr. Anchondo said he can bring the item back to the Committee at the next meeting for possible approval. He wanted to clarify that that this would be specific to All Souls Day, which is held every November at the cemetery.

Member Paulson conveyed that he is okay with this as long as it applies to families who have loved ones buried at the cemetery and not food trucks and vendors. He said it would very inappropriate to sell food at a cemetery.

Member Guanajuato Rodriguez pointed out that All Souls Day is an all-day event. However, there is also Mother's Day and Father's Day. She said she does not want this extended to every holiday.

Chairman Powell suggested requiring families to get a permit if they plan to cook that day at the cemetery. He said if the Committee permits this for All Souls Day, there will be others wanting to do the same thing for other events and holidays.

Mr. Anchondo said from staff's perspective, he would recommend the Committee focus solely on the All Souls Day event. He said the church submits a special event application to the city to hold the event. Mr. Anchondo noted that if the item comes back to the Committee for formal action, it would be for propane grills only – no open fire grills such as wood or charcoal.

Chairman Powell said he does not want grilling on cemetery grounds, but rather designate a certain area it. He said the cemetery is sacred to him - to everyone. Chairman Powell said he is willing to support this, but is concerned that some people may take advantage of this and abuse it.

Member Guanajuato Rodriguez conveyed that if approved, the Committee and city staff can start educating the public that this would be the only day this would be

allowed at the cemetery. She agreed with Chairman Powell that the cemetery is a sacred place, but pointed out that the cemetery is also a place where loved ones are buried. The way people celebrate their lives is by being at the cemetery all day with food and music.

Member Martinez wanted to clarify that for All Souls Day, St. Helens Church, which she is a member of, gets a permit, but they do not cook or encourage any kind of food. The church goes out there and have mass with no food at all. Member Martinez said when the church arrives, there are people already out there with food at their loved one's grave.


Vice Chair Tidwell asked if the people bringing the food do not have a permit, why is it being allowed? She said if St. Helens has the permit, and they choose not to bring food, then why is the Committee allowing someone who does not have a permit bring in food. Vice Chair Tidwell said she understands that this is how some people celebrate, but precooked food can be brought in. She does not support the cooking of food at the cemetery because there are too many opportunities for accidents to happen.

Member Guanajuato Rodriguez said the purpose of this is not to do it for one and not the other. If the Committee is going to move forward with this it would be for everyone on that day.

Chairman Powell pointed out that this is also a cultural thing. He said there can be further discussion at the next meeting.


VII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Powell adjourned the meeting at approximately 5:47 p.m.



Micah Powell, Chairman

ATTEST:



Mary Myers, Committee Secretary