

MINUTES
HIGHLAND CEMETERY BOARD
Owens Multipurpose Center Conference Room
July 6, 2022 AT 2:00 P.M.

Robert Williams, President, called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m. in Owens Multipurpose Center Conference Room. Meeting notice and agenda were posted on the City Hall bulletin board as required by State Law.

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: Robert Williams, Chairman, Gerald (Deuce) Gragg, Barry Beauchamp

ABSENT: Antonio Hopson, Christine James

OTHERS PRESENT: John Spencer Mullins, Cemetery Sexton, Dewayne Burk, Assistant City Manager, Katisha Wiley, Recording Administrative Assistant, Misty Tillman, Guest, Marsha Pendley, Guest.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION: Anyone Having an item of business to present to the board that does not appear on the agenda please come forward.

Audience Participation:

Misty Tilghman

1411 SE Walnut Creek

Lawton, OK 73501

Marsha Pendley

79 Hickory Rd

Eufaula, OK 74432

Ms. Pendley stated: In 1989 her sister was murdered. She buried her during the time when another supervisor before the previous supervisor was not in charge of the cemetery. She found the lot and decided to buy four of them so that her sister would not be alone. She paid for the four lots and gave the receipt to her mother. In 1994 her father passed away and she buried him right beside her sister and paid for it and at that time she bought the other four lots on the other side of her father, giving her a total of eight lots. She took her mother with her as she did previously when she went to bury her sister and this time Ms. Pendley paid with cash and her mother received the receipt. 3 months later Ms. Pendley's sister decided she would buy four more lots that would give them a total of 12. Ms. Pendley's sister lived out of town, so her sister sent Ms. Pendley the money and picked up her mother and went back and paid in cash, the receipt was given to her mother. Ms. Pendley then stated, that there has been nothing wrong with the lots for 33yrs and that we have been protecting them. There was a family member that was stealing everything that she could get her hands on. When Ms. Pendley's mother passed away as indicated by Ms. Pendley then stated that family member stole her other sister's marker. She is wanting her niece punished and that she can prove her niece did it and stated that the previous

supervisor knows that she did it and another city employee as well. She then stated that they had to have a special tool to remove the marker, and that the previous supervisor of the cemetery would be able to tell us who it is. (Gragg) asked whose name was on the marker? The name on the marker is Ruth Taylor. (Gragg) described the headstone and asked if it was hit by a lawnmower. (Tilghman) answered yes, but it was still in her garage. (Pendley) indicated that when (Tilghman) found out it was gone she called (Pendley) who then called her niece and admitted that it was at her house. (Pendley) stated that the previous supervisor heard the admission of guilt from her niece, and no one called the police or did anything. Pendley and Tilghman then went to the police and it took a year before anything was filed on her niece. (Tilghman) stated that the board needs to be on the marker. (Tilghman) when the marker was hit that she did nothing, she was upset about it and waited awhile and then the marker was hit again. She then stated that she thinks that the employee who hit the marker was the one who helped Ms. Pendley's niece remove it, she was unsure of the information. (Gragg) then asked Tilghman if she thought an employee from the cemetery assisted? (Pendley, Tilghman) both answered and said that the previous supervisor of the cemetery knows which employee assisted and nothing was done. (Tilghman) indicated that she brought paperwork as requested. (Gragg) asked Tilghman, how long was it before it was reported to the police? (Tilghman) indicated that she was not aware that she had to report it to the police. (Burk) indicated that the board can hear their story, but that the board could not take action. (Tilghman) stated that she went to her aunt's house on bishop road and her aunt said she had the marker and that they were going to fix it for her, later when the aunt passed away and her aunt's other daughter told her she saw the marker. (Pendley) then stated she filed a torque claim on her property and how does that happen. (Burk) interjected that the board cannot answer those questions. (Pendley) we own 12 spaces, and 33 yrs later her mother passes away and her sister is stealing everything out of the house and finds the receipts for the spaces that has been in her mother's drawer for 33 yrs. The employee that she paid the money too wrote the receipt out to her mother in her mother's name and that there were deeds. The rest of the family did not know of this information. When she buried her father in 1994 they were not offered deeds and there were not any deeds sent to them and that she did not know that they were not in her name even though she paid for them. (Pendley) went on to say that there are two bodies buried in her lots without her permission. There are 3 people buried in the cemetery, and because she does not live here that she did not give to give permission. She has been given a couple of options by the city, and she stated that she does not like either of them. (Pendley) they bought 12 lots and the city got into their business burying people in the wrong place and this has to be the previous supervisor's fault or the funeral homes, and that someone put the body in the wrong place, and that they could show us where 5 bodies are buried in the wrong place and that they know for a fact. She now does not have a place to be buried and that her option is to be moved away from her family. (Pendley) that she has almost \$50,000 worth spent so that her and her loved ones can be together, they have 4 lots and that somehow the city let her sister get control of them. She then indicated another employee from the city clerk's office that was indicated as an accomplice to the paperwork being tampered with and that they

have 14 people that still need to be buried. (Pendley) stated that she wants her lots back and that they were in her mothers and Tilghman mothers name original and that they are the executors and that the lots should come back to them and wants the city to leave them alone and they will bury their people where they want to bury them and does not want to share the spaces. She then went on to state that she has 3 bodies that need to be moved because she has 14 that need to be buried and they are in the wrong place and that she wants the 4 lots to come back to her and Tilghman. She indicated that her mother was not able to sign any paperwork due to her many visits in and out of the hospital. Pendley then asked how does she get them back? She is wanting justice on her property. (Tilghman) then states that the police would not do anything without video footage of the damages that were made to the marker. (Burk) did let them know that the Board could not take a formal action today due to not legally being on the agenda and that the agenda is posted 48hrs in advance and that if there is a problem we would do the best we can to assist, but the board could not take action on the matter today. We will add them to the next meeting agenda.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Consider changing procedures on how we proceed with burial plot transactions.

Motion by Robert Williams, **Second** by Gerald Gragg, **To make a motion to consider changing procedures on how we proceed with burial plot transactions and draft a proposal.**
AYE: Williams, Gragg, and Beauchamp **NAY:** None. ***Motion Passed.***

John (Cemetery Sexton) suggested that if he sells a four-space lot that usually is a family space lot that if they would like to assign spaces to whom they would want in the space it would require a signature, and if your name is not on the space, that the customer would not be able to have it whether its 30-60 years later. (Williams) asked if they are allowed to change the name of the person who they would like in a specific spot?

John (Cemetery Sexton) said yes and that it would have to be in writing and signed at the city clerk's office.

OLD BUSINESS ITEMS

- 4A. Consider approving the minutes of the July 6, 2022 meeting.**
- 4B. Consider drafting a proposal to council regarding a Double-Depth section of the Cemetery.**
- 4C. Consider drafting a proposal to present to the council regarding The Columbarium section of the cemetery.**
- 4D. Consider drafting a proposal to present to council regarding The Charity Burial procedure for cremation.**
- 4E. Consider drafting a proposal to present to council regarding the raise/add fees charged to the public.**

Motion by Robert Williams, Second by Gerald Gragg, To approve the minutes of July 6, 2022. AYE: Williams, Gragg, and Beauchamp NAY: None. *Motion Passed.*

- 1. Consider approving the minutes of the July 6, 2022 meeting.**

Motion by Robert Williams, Second by Gerald Gragg, To consider making a motion to draft a proposal to present to council regarding a Double-Depth section of the Cemetery. AYE: Williams, Gragg, and Beauchamp NAY: None. *Motion Passed.*

- 2A. Consider drafting a proposal to council regarding a Double-Depth section of the Cemetery.**

John (Cemetery Sexton) Suggested that it was time to take all the old business agenda items to council. *Burk (Asst. City Mgr)* Stated that any changes that are being made in the way that we operate the Cemetery, will have to go thru City Council, especially anything that has to do with the fees or charges. *John (Cemetery Sexton)* Stated that the old business agenda items are all related to funds that are being attached to them.

Motion by Barry Beauhamp Second by Robert Williams To consider making a motion to draft a proposal to present to council regarding A Columbarium Section of the Cemetery.
AYE: Williams, Gragg, and Beauchamp **NAY:** None. *Motion Passed.*

3B. Consider drafting a proposal to present to the council about a Columbarium section of the cemetery.

Barry (Cemetery Board Member) Stated that all of the items on the agenda would need to be in a package. What is being needed is a plan, where they are going to be and what are they going to look like, and the cost. It should not cost the city anything due to Beauchamp and Gragg are going to purchase the first two. **John (Cemetery Sexton)** Stated that he was not sure if the city would let them purchase the first two, but he was not sure. **Barry (Cemetery Board Member)** stated that if the city wanted to buy the first two Columbarium's, that they would make a donation to the city somehow.

Motion by Barry Beauchamp Second by Robert Williams. To consider making a motion to draft a proposal to present to council regarding The Charity Burial Procedure for Cremation. **AYE:** Williams, Beauchamp, Gragg **NAY:** None. *Motion Passed.*

4C. Consider drafting a proposal to present to council regarding The Charity Burial procedure for cremation.

Barry (Cemetery Board Member) Stated that all the entities need to be involved before we can put together a recommendation to present to the council. **John (Cemetery Sexton)** Stated that Chris Rayburn does all of the indigen. Comanche County was the only place that did not touch all of the indigen unless it is a murder case. Chris has been working with the County Assessor and County Commissioners Office and it has been approved to cremate all of the indigen. Barry, asked what part of the bill are they paying? John, the County Commissioners Office are responsible for signing off and says needed to be full body, you need a box or a casket, the city is going to dig the hole for free, and do the set-up for free the total would be \$1,225.00 that we spend, and we can give them a cremation for \$450.00. You would have to have the County Commissioners signature for an indigen burial. Barry, stated that a proposal needs to be drawn up.

Motion by Robert Williams **Second** by Gerald Gragg. **To consider making a motion to draft a proposal to present to council regarding The raising/add fees charged to the public. AYE:** Williams, Beauchamp, Gragg **NAY:** None. ***Motion Passed.***

5D. Consider drafting a proposal to present to council regarding the raise/add fees charged to the public.

John (Cemetery Sexton) The highland Cemetery is the only cemetery in the country that does not charge a set-up fee. ***Barry (Cemetery Board Member)*** stated that this is a good opportunity to build it into the fee schedule.

Meeting Adjourned

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:19 p.m.

Motion by Warren, **Second** by Sheppard, to adjourn the meeting of July 6, 2022. **AYE:** Williams, Gragg, Beauchamp **NAY:** None. ***Motion Passed.***