

**MINUTES
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING
HIGHLAND CEMETERY BOARD
MAY 28, 2008**

The Chairman, Chris Elledge, called the Special Called Meeting of the Highland Cemetery Board to order at 1:05 p.m., Wednesday, May 28, 2008 at the Highland Cemetery Office. Notice of the meeting and agenda were posted on the City Hall bulletin board as required by State Law.

ROLL CALL: Chris Elledge, Raymond Jackson, and Robert Williams.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

STAFF PRESENT: Kim Shahan, Parks and Recreation Director
Gerald Catlett, Parks and Grounds Administrator
Azalee McGahee, Cemetery Sexton
Jeanie Wheeler, Recording Secretary

VISITORS: Larry Campbell.

THERE WAS NO CONSIDERATION OF PRIOR MINUTES AT THIS TIME.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

**1. REVIEW, CONSIDER, AND TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION CONCERNING
HIGHLAND CEMETERY FEES AND CHARGES.**

Elledge introduced this item for discussion and agreed that the fee structure has not been changed since 2004 and costs to provide cemetery and care of lots are going up.

Shahan provided the background for the City of Lawton budget proposals for the Cemetery and the Parks and Recreation Department as a whole. He noted that the Parks and Recreation Department has not always been viewed as a necessity department. He added that the request to consider raising the fees for the Cemetery operation. He informed that above the revenue fees generated by the cemetery care fund a \$243,300.78 budget was adopted for 2007-2008 just for cemetery operations. He assured that there is historically never a cut in the cemetery budget due to the revenue generated, but he as the Department Director has to look as revenue sources for all divisions for the entire department.

He added the Parks and Recreation Department not only is responsible for the operation and care of the Cemetery but for maintenance of all city buildings, Museum, McMahon Auditorium, Sports facilities, lakes facilities, 81 parks and byways, medians, etc. He added that there would be cuts in all areas of Department revenue based operations. He noted that the Cemetery fees had not been reviewed and raised since May 1, 2004. (Old fee sheet included in minutes).

He stated that whatever positive recommendations the Board could propose would be gladly accepted and appreciated.

Catlett present his recommendations for cemetery fee increases based on a 50.00 increase for a single lot.

Shahan added that the philosophy in a community to run cemetery does not run like a business – if so the cemetery would have to shut down. Keeping fees as low as you can does not work to generate revenue to keep a cemetery running. The cemetery should pay completely for operation but more than a 70,000.00 per year figure, but to operate without a business point of view requires of the citizens of Lawton to underwrite nearly 200,000 annually.

Catlett informed that the recommended fee increases would generate approximately 14,000.00 more in sales based on last year's cemetery sales. He added in comparison with all other charges, going up such as fuel, utilities, etc it stands to reason the cemetery needs to be more self-sufficient than depending on the City to carry the load. There is a need of revenue in all areas of the City. If the fees are not raised the city cannot continue to give same service without the need to generate more revenue.

McGahee recommended changes to the disinterment of \$1,000.00 within the cemetery.

Jackson asked when the fee increase would become effective.

Shahan answered that the increase would need to begin effective July 1, 2008 simultaneously with the new budget.

Elledge agreed with raising the disinterment fee within the cemetery to \$1,000.00.

Catlett also recommended reviewing the fees annually.

MOTION by JACKSON; SECOND by WILLIAMS.

To approve action for cemetery fees and charges increases as recommended by the staff and listed on the adopted fees and charges sheet. (Included with these minutes).

AYES: Elledge, Jackson, and Williams. NAYS: None. MOTION CARRIED.

Shahan explained present adopted budget for cemetery repair and maintenance and capital outlay equipment as prepared and ready to be submitted to council for approval. He then thanked the Board for their care in seeing the increases were appropriate at this time, but agreed with Catlett that this needs to be reviewed annually.

Elledge commented that Sunset is this cemetery's only competition – no reason to be equal in rates or even a little below. Biggest disadvantage for this cemetery is running out of room – last projection 2018 will be out of room. It would be good if the City of Lawton had property it

could trade for development of more cemetery room.

Campbell stated he thought the last report to Council was 50 years.

Catlett commented that the \$278,000 figure of this coming year's projected budget does not include repair of tagged vehicles or fuel to operate.

McGahee stated he would see that distribution of pricing to the funeral homes would get out in a timely manner. He also recommended that the fee change be placed in the newspaper.

There were no other comments or discussion and the meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

RESPECTIVELY SUBMITTED,
CHRIS ELLEDGE, CHAIRMAN
HIGHLAND CEMETERY BOARD