

Coachella Valley Public Cemetery District

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Friday, June 14, 2024

8:00 a.m.

A meeting of the governing Board of the Coachella Valley Public Cemetery District (CVPCD) was held at the CVPCD Executive Office, located 82847 Avenue 52, Coachella, CA 92236 on Friday, June 14, 2024, at 8:00 a.m.

Public Notices were posted by the Clerk of the Board on Monday, June 10, 2024, at the following locations:

1. CVPCD Executive Office – 82847 Avenue 52, Coachella, CA 92236
2. The CVPCD website – <http://coachellacemetery.org>

CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL

Chair Ernesto Rosales called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m., those in attendance were as follows:

Trustees present:

Ernesto Rosales, Chair

Judy Vossler, Vice-Chair

Bruce Underwood, Trustee

John Rios, Trustee

Trustees absent:

Marcos Coronel, Trustee (Excused, Board action Rios/Vossler, 4-0)

Additional participants:

Josh Bonner, General Manager

Sherry Winder, Finance Analyst/Clerk of the Board

Carlos Campos, General Counsel

Guillermo De La Torre, Maintenance Services Manager

Additional participants for public comment:

None

FLAG SALUTE

MOMENT OF SILENCE

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Public Comment was received from Clara A. Hernandez-Vargas via Facebook Messenger and was distributed to the Board of Trustees.

1. CONSENT CALENDAR

1.1 Trustee Minutes

- a. Special Board Meeting – May 17, 2024
- b. Special Board Meeting – May 24, 2024

1.2 Finance and Administration

- a. Approval of Expenditures – Checks and ACH transactions as detailed May 2024
- b. Investment Report
- c. Budget to Actual April EOM

1.3 Vendor Insurance Requirement Adjustment

Adjustment to vendor liability language

Staff Report Recommendation: *Rather than requesting all the vendors carry a higher line of coverage, staff recommends lowering the coverage threshold to “\$1,000,000 per occurrence and \$2,000,000 aggregate” for our vendors. This level of coverage, in tandem with the strong liability waiver language we have in place on the document, should serve to protect the interest of the District without creating additional requirements and hardships for our vendors.*

Motion: Vossler – Move to approve
Second: Underwood
Yes: Rosales, Vossler, Underwood, Rios
Abstain: None
No: None
Absent: Coronel
Motion passed.

2. ACTION ITEMS

2.1 Upright Headstone Study

Results of upright headstone review and required action

Staff Report Recommendation: *Staff recommends the Board give direction to issue a Request for Proposal (“RFP”) for the needed headstone repairs and bring back the results of the competitive bid process to them for consideration. Without objection, the GM will order the repair of the headstones to do not require contacted work.*

GM Bonner reviewed best practice is to annually inspect upright headstones. He noted that we had an independent study done and a second study was performed by staff. Maintenance Services Manager De La Torre reviewed staff findings and presented options for securing, or repairing, the headstones. GM Bonner highlighted the potential danger posed by children playing near the headstones and recommended requesting a vendor assessment for cost, which is currently unknown. Board discussion ensued. No action taken. Direction given to staff to go to RFP to determine cost.

2.2 2024-2025 Budget

Consideration of the 2024-2025 District Operating and Capital Budget

Staff Report Recommendation: *Staff recommends the Board approve the budget as presented in Exhibit A.*

GM Bonner stated a request from Trustee Coronel for approval to be deferred to July as he was unable to make the meeting today. GM Bonner reviewed the adjustments made to the budget since its initial presentation in May. Finance Analyst Winder noted the updated format of the Chart of Accounts which will be organized into

sections instead of a single list, and highlighted the main account changes in the budget, noting the accounts that have been condensed. GM Bonner reviewed the security budget, noting that it had been a previously mentioned area of concern, and stated that we have longer hours than other cemeteries, which require multiple staffing shifts, which contribute to the cost. Board discussion ensued. Vice Chair Vossler questioned whether Trustee Coronel had submitted any questions, or comments, in writing, GM Bonner noted he was only aware of the security budget concern he mentioned at the May meeting.

Motion: Vossler – Move for approval of budget
Second: Rios
Yes: Rosales, Vossler, Underwood, Rios
Abstain: None
No: None
Absent: Coronel
Motion passed.

2.3 Final 2023-2024 Budget Adjustments

Adjustments to current year fiscal budget

Staff Report Recommendation: *Staff is recommending the following adjustments to the 2023-2024 budget (with explanation):*

- 6070 – Other Benefits

Request to adjust budget for correction to Retiree health insurance rates.

Required adjustment: \$4,000

Final Adjusted Budget - \$80,157.75

- 6108 – Office Expenses

Request to adjust budget due to expense of ordering replacement flags for the cemetery. This was scheduled for the 2024 budget but had to be moved up due to need for Memorial Day.

Adjustment of \$1,500

Adjusted Budget - \$13,000

- 6120 – Administrative

Request to adjust budget due to the annual service of fire extinguishers, County of Riverside fees for property taxes & apportionment adjustment.

Adjustment of \$1,500

Adjusted Budget - \$20,000

- 6155 – Security & Safety

Request to adjust budget due to billing errors from April & June 2023.

Adjustment of \$2,000

Adjusted Budget - \$197,000

- 6151 – Structures & Improvements

Request to adjust budget due to Columbarium pump replacement.

Adjustment of \$1,000

Adjusted Budget - \$26,000

- 6165 – Special Events

Request to adjust budget due to DDLM expenses exceeding budget.

Adjustment of \$7,000

Adjusted Budget - \$106,500

- 6260 – Outside Services

Request to adjust budget due to water testing invoice from PY, shredding for records retention & new employee headshots.

Adjustment of \$700

Adjusted Budget - \$33,200

- 6280 – Grounds Maintenance

Request to adjust budget due to asphalt patching and main line repairs.

Adjustment of \$6,500

Adjusted Budget - \$379,500

Total Adjustment to budget is \$24,200

GM Bonner reviewed the adjustments requested, noting that these are the final budget adjustments for this fiscal year.

Motion: Rios – Move to approve adjustments

Second: Underwood

Yes: Rosales, Vossler, Underwood, Rios

Abstain: None

No: None

Absent: Coronel

Motion passed.

2.4 Contract Modification Requests for Accounting Services

Eide Bailly request for contract changes

Staff Report Recommendation: *Nothing in the request is unusual, and it can all be accommodated. Staff would recommend the Board approve the contract as proposed. However, with the caution that weakening the indemnity and defense thresholds are significant and should not be taken lightly. Perhaps due to the nature of the business being conducted it is acceptable in this case, but the District would likely not want to create a pattern of taking this action in future contracts.*

GM Bonner reviewed the staff report and noted that this organization has requested modifications that he considers significant, which is why they are being brought to the Board for approval. Counsel Campos stated that, from a legal perspective, broader coverage is generally preferred in terms of indemnification. Due to the nature of the service, the risk is likely minimal, but it is up to the Board to decide whether to approve the proposed changes. Board discussion ensued.

Motion: Vossler – Modify contract as submitted

Second: Underwood

Yes: Rosales, Vossler, Underwood, Rios
Abstain: None
No: None
Absent: Coronel
Motion passed.

3. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

GM Bonner reviewed that the Board established a process last year to create a scope of work for the upcoming year. These informational items are for the Board to determine if they would like staff to work on and bring recommendations back to the Board. He noted that, in addition to the below items, the following are already on the scope of work for the year: Violence Prevention Policy, Asphalt Repair Project, Filming Policy, and Palm Tree Removal.

3.1 Dia de los Muertos Event Modifications

Potential changes to promotional items and stage presentations

GM Bonner reviewed that this item was requested by the Board due to concerns about the cost of promotional items provided at the event. Board discussion ensued, and a DDLM Committee was formed to review and report back to the Board. Committee Members include Chair Rosales and Vice Chair Vossler.

3.2 Dia de los Muertos Sponsorships

Possible sponsorship opportunities to offset event expenses

GM Bonner reviewed that this item was requested by the Board. Vice Chair Vossler requested that this be included in the DDLM Committee, and they will bring back a recommendation to the Board.

3.3 Creation of District Foundation

A nonprofit entity to support the work of the District

GM Bonner reviewed that this item was requested by the Board to be brought back. He asked if the Board would like the District to pursue creating a foundation. GM Bonner noted that in his observation, a foundation will eventually need to be established for the upkeep of the Veterans Memorial. Board discussion ensued, and the Board agreed this was not needed at this time.

3.4 District Award Nomination Process

Criteria for submitting an award nomination for Board approval

GM Bonner requested that when the Board nominates someone, the nominator commits to providing staff with detailed information for the nomination. The Board agreed that this was a reasonable request.

3.5 Pension Funding Policy

District policy on pension and OPEB funding

GM Bonner reviewed that this request has come up several times and feels the Board should give action to staff

to review and bring back. Board discussion ensued, and the Board requested this item be brought back.

3.6 Public Tours

Establishment of regular public District tours

GM Bonner reviewed the idea of public tours, noting that conducting each tour twice a year would enhance transparency. Two types of tours were suggested; an operations tour and an evening tour, both to be led by GM Bonner. Trustee Rios suggested creating a pamphlet about the District, and the Board agreed this would be a good idea for the 100-year Anniversary. Board discussion ensued, and the Board requested that this item be brought back.

3.7 Travel and Reimbursement Policy

Review of lodging and meals sections

GM Bonner reviewed two issues with current policy that he would like to propose revising:

- 1) According to policy, room rates offered by event hosts must be used. GM Bonner proposed adding “unless alternate arrangements can be made for less cost to District” to the policy wording.
- 2) The per diem rate of \$80 is no longer reasonable based on the examples provided, and he would like permission to bring this back with a proposed increase.

Board discussion ensued, and the Board requested that staff revise the policy for review.

3.8 Wreaths Across America Program

Possible District participation in the program

GM Bonner reviewed options for this program to determine if this was something the Board would like staff to work on. Board discussion ensued, and the Board determined that there was no need for further action at this time.

3.9 Adjustment to District Rules and Regulations

Policy addressing the opening of caskets on District property

GM Bonner reviewed an issue regarding funeral homes receiving requests from families to add items to caskets at graveside, noting that our current policy does not prohibit this practice. Board discussion ensued, and the Board requested that staff prepare a policy prohibiting the opening of caskets on District grounds for their review.

3.10 Memorial Item Weight Limit

Consideration of weight restrictions for memorial items

GM Bonner reviewed this item as a request from staff concerning memorial items, noting the necessity for a weight limit due to staff’s requirements to lift, transfer, and handle these items for retrieval purposes. Board discussion ensued, and the Board requested that staff prepare a policy for review.

3.11 Cafeteria Plan Adjustment

Review of District contributions to health care

GM Bonner noted that this item is coming to the Board due to the Compensation Study being deferred until

2026. The current contribution rate, set by the Board three years ago, is \$1,400 per month. Since then, health care costs have increased by 24%. Board discussion ensued, and the Board requested that staff prepare a proposal for Board consideration.

3.12 Adjustment to Procurement Policy

Consideration of Minor Contract and General Manager spending thresholds

GM Bonner reviewed the growth of the District, highlighting that we are now the second largest public cemetery district in the state of California by budget. He requested that the Board adjust the spending thresholds to align with Orange County Cemetery, proposing an increase in the GM spending threshold from \$15,000 to \$50,000 to enhance efficiency. The Board requested this item be brought back for review.

3.13 Disposition of Flower Easels

Charge for transfer and storage of flower easels

GM Bonner reviewed the issue of flower easels typically being abandoned after services and requested formal guidance from the Board on how to handle this matter. He suggested several options for disposition, including giving them away, selling them back to florist shops, or requiring their removal at the end of graveside services. Board discussion ensued, and the Board requested that staff prepare a policy for review.

3.14 Capital Management 10 Year Plan

Discussion of changes to 10-Year projected capital spend

GM Bonner reviewed adjustments that have been made to the 10-Year capital spend projections. He noted that based on his research with local dealerships, vehicles ideally should be traded in between 70,000 to 90,000 miles for maximum trade-in value. Therefore, the GM vehicle may need to be moved up for replacement to 2025 due to its current mileage.

3.15 Mission Statement

Review of current Mission Statement

GM Bonner reviewed the mission statement and requested permission to bring it back for revision. Board discussion ensued, and the Board requested that staff bring this item back for review.

3.16 Interment Vault Price Increase

Notice of Price Increase from Vendor

GM Bonner reviewed the issue of increasing prices and noted that because the fee study has been deferred until 2025, there is currently no mechanism in place to address these rising costs. GM Bonner suggested that some items should not be presold due to rising costs and proposed alternative options such as pre-payments, with the difference owed based on current costs. Board discussion ensued, and the Board requested that staff bring back a proposal for review.

3.17 Audit Update

Update on current audit cycle progress and status

Finance Analyst Winder updated the Board on the status of the 2022/2023 Fiscal Year audit, noting that the main issue is that the report used to calculate Unearned Revenue from Pre-Need sales was not providing accurate data due to historical misuse of the CRM system from which the report was pulled. This issue was discovered by Finance Analyst Winder, who shared it with the District’s Auditor, David Farnsworth. Auditor Farnsworth notified staff that he would be unable to issue a clean audit unless this data is cleaned up, prompting the Administrative and Cemetery Services Teams to work an additional 120 weekend hours over the next six weeks to correct the issue.

4. TRUSTEE/GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS

4.1 Trustee Comments and Event/Function Report Out

Chair Rosales went to Ventura for a California Association of Public Cemeteries meeting, where the attendees had nice things to say about our cemetery and requested more of our Annual Report pamphlets. Chair Rosales commented that he spoke to a family that had a vehicle hit by our security while visiting the District. GM Bonner stated security has not recently reported an incident. Chair Rosales then questioned whether all funeral homes had signed the liability waiver, to which GM Bonner responded yes. Chair Rosales concluded by thanking Finance Analyst Winder for her diligent work.

Trustee Underwood attended a Palm Desert Area Chamber of Commerce mixer where he spoke with a Palm Desert City employee about surplus land owned by the City. He inquired about the potential for this land to be offered for purchase, with the idea of using it as a possible extension of the District. The response he received indicated that any decision regarding the sale of the land would be up to the City Council. However, the employee mentioned that the recommendation would likely be against selling the land, as the City’s preference is to retain ownership of it.

4.2 General Manager Report

GM Bonner reported we had a recent accident involving the front gate due to a vehicle being left in neutral when entering the office for an appointment, an annual water report testing was missed by one month and steps are being taken to prevent this from happening in the future, new dump truck has been received, and he highlighted the work of District employees in community.

A recess was called at 9:33 a.m.
The meeting resumed at 9:39 a.m.

Chair Rosales adjourned the meeting to closed session at 9:39 a.m.

5. CLOSED SESSION ITEMS

5.1 Public Employee Performance Evaluation
Title: General Manager

The Board reconvened from closed session at 10:00 a.m. and Counsel Campos reported that the General Manager evaluation was successfully completed. The Board of Trustees thanked GM Bonner for all his hard work, stating he is exceeding expectations.

Meeting adjourned at 10:03 a.m.

NEXT MEETING TIME, DATE AND LOCATION

Regular Board Meeting

Friday, July 12, 2024

8:00 a.m.

Coachella Valley Public Cemetery District Executive Office

82847 Avenue 52

Coachella, CA 92236

Respectfully Submitted,

Sherry Winder

Clerk of the Board

Approved: _____ BOT Mtg.