

Coachella Valley Public Cemetery District
Board of Trustee Meeting Minutes
Friday, August 9, 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 at 82847 Avenue 52, Coachella, CA 92236 on Friday, August 9, 2024, at 8:00 a.m.

Public Notices were posted by the Clerk of the Board on Monday, August 5, 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 8:03 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

Additional participants:

Josh Bonner, General Manager
Sherry Winder, Finance Analyst/Clerk of the Board
Enda Rodriguez, Administrative Assistant *(via Zoom)*
Oscar Verdugo, General Counsel
Jayson Braude, Rojas Public Affairs Communications *(via Zoom)*
Jasmid Enciso, Rojas Public Affairs Communications *(via Zoom)*

Additional participants for public comment:

Brad Anderson - Rancho Mirage, CA
Rosanna Contreras - Indio, CA

FLAG SALUTE

MOMENT OF SILENCE

PUBLIC COMMENT

Brad Anderson from Rancho Mirage addressed the Board regarding the potential for a cell tower lease and commented on Agenda Items 3.3 and 3.4.

Rosanna Contreras from Indio spoke to the Board about upright headstones.

Public Comments were received from Kim Bowlin via US mail, Gregorio Sandoval via email, and Johnathan Arroyo via email, and were distributed to the Board of Trustees.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

None

GM Bonner noted that Action Item 3.7 “Adoption of Resolution 130” was being pulled from the agenda because the Resolution had not yet been received from legal.

1. PRESENTATIONS

1.1 Presentation by Rojas Communication

Update on lobbying efforts on behalf of District

Jayson Braude provided an update that the initial Federal funding request of \$250,000 was revised to \$1,000,000 and has subsequently been approved for \$850,000. It is now waiting to go to the floor of the House of Representatives for approval. He anticipates receiving the final approval for the Federal funding request by the end of December. It does not appear that State funding will be available for this project, however, Jasmid Enciso reported that support letters continue to be sent to Sacramento, and legislators have been invited to attend the District’s Dia De Los Muertos event in November.

2. CONSENT CALENDAR

2.1 Trustee Minutes

a. Board Meeting – July 12, 2024

2.2 Finance and Administration

- a. Approval of Expenditures – Checks and ACH transactions as detailed July 2024
- b. Investment Report
- c. Budget to Actual July 2024, with end of year executive budget adjustments

2.3 Extension of Security Contract

Extend agreement to Nov. 11, 2024

Staff Report Recommendation: Approve the two-month extension of the agreement to November 11, 2024, as presented.

2.4 Capital Project Budget Increase

Increase to budget for John Deere Gator XUV 560 Units (2)

Staff Report Recommendation: Staff are requesting the budget for the capital expenses in the 2024-2025 capital budget, line items 7904.2 and 7904.3, be increased to \$20,486.62 each.

Vice-Chair Vossler asked GM Bonner if he had any comments regarding the security contract. GM Bonner explained the extension is due to timing, specifically the Dia de Los Muertos event on November 1 & 2, 2024. He recommended approving the two-month extension to ensure continuity of service with our current security

vendor who is experienced with this event, rather than risking potential issues that could arise from contracting with a new vendor without the historical knowledge right before the event.

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

3. ACTION ITEMS

3.1 Public Media Production

Use of District property for film and media

Staff Report Recommendation: *Staff recommends adoption of the policy and associated licensing agreement as presented.*

GM Bonner reviewed that legal counsel provided two document proposals for review: the Media Production Activities Policy and a License Agreement for Media Production Activities. Vice-Chair Vossler stated that while “news and media” were excluded from the application fee, they were not exempt from the 30-day requirement, which could be problematic for news stations that typically cannot delay their reporting. GM Bonner suggested removing the verbiage “news and media” from the policies and noted that an application fee is required but no specific amount was provided. Board discussion ensued. GM Bonner was asked to return with recommendations, including a proposed fee to charge.

3.2 Request to Change October 11, 2024, Board Meeting

Change date to accommodate CAPC Annual Education Seminar

Staff Report Recommendation: *Change the scheduled Board meeting date to accommodate the CAPC meeting.*

GM Bonner reviewed that the California Association of Public Cemeteries 2024 Annual Education Seminar would conflict with the scheduled meeting date of October 11, 2024, noting that he and Chair Rosales would be attending the seminar, in addition to any other Trustees interested. He suggested October 4, 2024, or October 18, 2024, as alternate meeting dates for consideration, noting that if the meeting date was set to October 4, 2024, the financials would not be ready in time for approval at that meeting and would be delayed to the November meeting.

- Motion: Underwood – Approve change of meeting to October 4, 2024
 - Second: Rios
 - Yes: Rosales, Vossler, Underwood, Rios
 - Abstain: None
 - No: None
 - Absent: Coronel
- Motion passed.

3.3 Travel and Reimbursement Policy

Adjustment to Districts daily maximum allowance for travel expense

Staff Report Recommendation: *staff is recommending the following changes to the policy:*

Section B, Subsection 2, "Lodging".

"Lodging costs will be reimbursed or paid for when travel on official District business reasonably requires an overnight stay. Government and group rates offered by a provider of lodging services shall be used when available. Adjacent lodging facilities may be used if lower rates are found. If exercising the option to utilize alternate lodging, daily hotel cost plus reimbursable driving distance (to and from) must be less than the group rate offered."

Section B, Subsection 3, "Meals".

"Meal expenses and associated gratuities should be moderate, taking into account community standards and the prevailing restaurant costs of the area. Actual meal expenses and associated gratuities will be reimbursed or paid when incurred by the Trustee and/or District employee in the performance of official duties. Receipts are required to substantiate the expenses. Trustees and/or District employees may receive a reimbursement of \$100.00 per day for meals, plus taxes and up to 20% in gratuities. Trustees and/or District employees shall not be reimbursed for alcohol consumption."

Note – This policy will require change by resolution. Staff, once provided direction, will return with a resolution at the next Board meeting.

GM Bonner reviewed the requested changes to the policy. Chair Rosales inquired about the date of the last update, and GM Bonner noted it was in 2018. During the Board discussion, Trustee Rios suggested increasing the meal reimbursement to \$125.00 per day. The Board agreed that this increase would help avoid the need to revisit the issue in the near future.

Motion: Vossler – Accept changes as proposed with adjustment from \$100 to \$125 for meals
Second: Rios
Yes: Rosales, Vossler, Underwood, Rios
Abstain: None
No: None
Absent: Coronel
Motion passed.

3.4 Trustee Compensation

Review of Trustee compensation for meetings and official activities

Staff Report Recommendation: *Adjust Trustee Compensation amount.*

Note: Any adjustment to the Trustee compensation must be made by resolution. If the Board would like to take action on this matter, staff will return it as an action item at a future meeting along with a resolution.

GM Bonner reviewed that this item is being brought to the Board for direction as the first step in the process. He noted that the California Health & Safety Code allows the Board to adjust compensation, with increases limited to 5% per year, and the proposed increase would align with the compensation levels of other Cemetery Districts. GM Bonner also mentioned for public knowledge that the Trustees do not receive additional

compensation, such as health or pension benefits. Following the discussion, the Board directed staff to begin the process for implementing the increase.

3.5 Canopy Use

Review of canopy use by the public during services

Staff Report Recommendation: *Staff recommends no changes to the “General Rules and Regulations” policy. We also recommend the Board rescind their temporary allowance for private canopies during services.*

GM Bonner reviewed that the Board had previously approved the temporary use of canopies and noted that the concerns which prompted the initial policy remain unchanged. After reviewing the liability waiver proposed by legal, he highlighted that it does not sufficiently protect the District from external issues. Therefore, he recommended that the Board rescind the temporary allowance for private canopies. GM Bonner suggested forming a temporary Operations Ad Hoc Committee to address ongoing concerns related to the grounds. Following a Board discussion, Chair Rosales and Trustee Rios agreed to establish the Operations Ad Hoc Committee.

Motion: Underwood - Rescind temporary canopy policy
Second: Rios
Yes: Rosales, Vossler, Underwood, Rios
Abstain: None
No: None
Absent: Coronel
Motion passed.

3.6 Disposition of Flower Easels

Availability of Flower Easels for Buyback

Staff Report Recommendation: *Staff is recommending the following disposition policy for easels:*

Policy

All easels will be available on a first-come, first-serve basis during the hours of 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., Mon-Fri (closed holidays). Payment by check only, payable to the “Coachella Valley Public Cemetery District”. Easels are only available for purchase by licensed floral shops and funeral homes operating within District boundaries. Minimum purchase per visit of twenty (20) units total.

Cost Per Easel:

Metal Easels: \$2.00 each

Wood Easels: \$1.00 each

Units are sold as is, no refunds or returns allowed.

Units may be removed by the funeral home, floral shop, or family at the conclusion of a service at no charge. Charges shall only apply to units that were removed and stored on District property. There is no right of ownership for units left on District property, units may be sold to any qualifying entity regardless of origin. The District reserves the right to dispose of easels left on property at any time.

General Rules and Regulations

Staff is recommending the following addition to the District’s “General Rules and Regulations” policy under the category “Interments”:

“Flowers, memorial items, and other personal items left at the conclusion of the interment ceremony are subject to removal under the terms contained in the “Memorial Decorations” section of this policy. Easels and other memorial “props” left at the site of an interment ceremony that exceed 36 inches in height are subject to immediate removal and become property of the District.”

GM Bonner reviewed that this item was brought back from the planning session and presented the staff recommendation for easels to be made available to any eligible vendor during business hours, with a minimum of 20 purchased at a time. Board discussion ensued.

- Motion: Vossler – Approve the sales of the easels with staff recommendations
 - Second: Rios
 - Yes: Rosales, Vossler, Underwood, Rios
 - Abstain: None
 - No: None
 - Absent: Coronel
- Motion passed.

Item 3.7 pulled from Agenda

~~3.7 Adoption of Resolution 130~~

~~—Increasing employee cafeteria plan to \$1,800 per month~~

~~**Staff Report Recommendation:** Approve Resolution 130 as presented.~~

4. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

4.1 Workplace Violence Prevention Plan

Compliance with California SB 553

GM Bonner informed the Board that due to SB 553, the District was required to prepare a Workplace Violence Prevention Plan, which has been completed and includes an Emergency Response Plan and a Bomb Threat Checklist. He noted that it was a collaborative effort with employees. The Board commended GM Bonner on a well-written plan.

4.2 State of the District

Video series to highlight District accomplishments

GM Bonner shared his vision for the State of the District as a video presentation covering five key topics: governance, policy, finance, operations, and cemetery services. Each Trustee will select and speak on their respective topic. The presentation will premiere at the Dia de Los Muertos event in November and will remain accessible to the public through the District's YouTube channel, website, and social media. GM Bonner also reviewed the production plan, noting that this effort would be a meaningful gesture to the communities the District serves.

4.3 Dia de los Muertos Committee Update

Rosales/Vossler

Chair Rosales and Vice Chair Vossler reviewed their Committee meeting, noting a suggestion to provide smaller pieces of bread to double the capacity. They also recommended providing water bottles, increasing lighting on the grounds, and exploring options for ADA drop-off zones. Chair Rosales and Vice Chair Vossler then stated that the committee can be disbanded.

5. TRUSTEE/GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS

5.1 Trustee Comments and Event/Function Report Out

Chair Rosales shared that he regularly stops by the cemetery and is pleased to see an increase in public comments. He noted that, while the public may not always be aware, staff is often already addressing the issues raised. Chair Rosales stated that he welcomes public comments and values hearing about the concerns of the community. He also expressed his gratitude to the team and legal counsel for their efforts.

Vice Chair Vossler mentioned that she is at the District weekly to sign checks, and thanked Trustee Rios for signing checks last week in her absence. She also noted that she is due for Ethics training and plans to complete it at the CSDA conference in September. Vice Chair Vossler encouraged other Board Members to join her for their training.

Trustee Underwood reported that he met with the Executive Director of LAFCO, attended an online CSDA seminar titled “But... It’s Our Standard Contract – Sign This, Not That”. He expressed enthusiasm about his involvement with LAFCO, noting that they had a meeting earlier this month and will meet ten times each year, with two months being dark. Trustee Underwood will also be attending the LAFCO annual meeting. He mentioned that there is a public member position on the LAFCO board and encouraged the public to be aware of this for future openings.

Trustee Rios commented that he is pleased with the work the Board is doing, despite facing occasional challenges with the public.

5.2 General Manager Report

GM Bonner stated that certain areas of the maintenance building will be subject to the new Cal/OSHA Indoor Heat Illness Prevention Regulation CCR 3396. He shared that Trustee Coronel, in conversation with the General Manager, suggested simplifying the stipend reimbursement request process to streamline future processing for Trustees. GM Bonner noted that, despite extensive notifications through printed notices, signage, website posts, and social media, many families did not retrieve their memorial items before the nutsedge treatment. He also expressed dissatisfaction with the recent treatment, mentioning that the grass was cut prior to application and that spraying around the headstones was not tested, resulting in incomplete coverage.

GM Bonner highlighted that we now have three years of trend tracking for reports, new carpet has been installed in the Administrative Office, and the 2024/2025 budget book will be available soon. Given the recent increase in public comments, he emphasized that his approach to investigating these comments is focused on improving processes with the perspective of “how can we do better?”

Trustee Rios asked about the survey response count, and GM Bonner stated he believed the total count was approaching 100. Trustee Underwood inquired about the CalPERS health insurance increase notice. GM Bonner expressed gratitude to the Board for their foresight in adjusting the Cafeteria Plan last month, noting that this adjustment was made not only for prior year increases but also in anticipation of future increases, such as the

current 10% increase.

Adjourned to closed session at 9:24 a.m.

6. CLOSED SESSION ITEMS

6.1 CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL – ANTICIPATED LITIGATION

Significant Exposure to Litigation, Pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.9(d)(2)(e)(1)
One (1) Potential Case

The Board reconvened from closed session at 9:36 a.m. and Counsel Verdugo reported: no reportable action.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 9:36 a.m.

NEXT MEETING TIME, DATE AND LOCATION

Friday, September 13, 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.