

Coachella Valley Public Cemetery District

Board of Trustee Meeting Minutes

Friday, September 13, 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, September 13, 2024, at 8:00 a.m.

Public Notices were posted by the Clerk of the Board on Monday, September 9, 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

Marcos Coronel, Trustee *(arrived @8:09 a.m.)*

Bruce Underwood, Trustee

John Rios, Trustee

Additional participants:

Josh Bonner, General Manager

Sherry Winder, Finance Analyst/Clerk of the Board

Carlos Campos, General Counsel

Joshua Bernsen, E. Lees+ Associates *(via Zoom)*

Additional participants for public comment:

Abel and Maricela Zabalza – Indio, CA

Jason Jackson – Indio, CA

FLAG SALUTE

MOMENT OF SILENCE

PUBLIC COMMENT

Maricela Zabalza from Indio addressed the Board to express her interest in volunteering with the Cemetery District.

Jason Jackson from Indio addressed the Board, requesting consideration for an increase to the Southwest Landscape contract. He cited the minimum wage increase effective January 1, 2025, and emphasized the need to increase the number of landscapers from five (5) to six (6) during the summer months.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

None

1. PRESENTATIONS

1.1 Presentation by Lees+ Associates

Update on District's 10-Year Master Plan

Joshua Bernsen from E. Lees+ Associates presented their findings to date, reviewing an overview of staff interviews and the public survey. He highlighted the community's interest in additional restrooms, water/bottle filling stations, shaded seating areas, and improved parking throughout the Cemetery. Board discussion ensued, during which GM Bonner requested that the District's vendors and funeral homes be contacted for their feedback as well. GM Bonner thanked Joshua Bernsen for his presentation and requested that the raw data be provided to the Board for review.

2. CONSENT CALENDAR

2.1 Trustee Minutes

- a. Board Meeting – August 9, 2024
- b. Special Board Meeting – August 28, 2024

2.2 Finance and Administration

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

2.3 Decommission of Side-by-Side Units

Decommission and liquidation of two (2) John Deere Gator XUV 560 units

Staff Report Recommendation: *Decommission and authorize the disposition of current side-by-side units:*

- John Deere Gator XUV 560 Serial Number: 1M0560FBCGM010363
- John Deere Gator XUV 560 Serial Number: 1M0560FBTGM010333

2.4 Decommission of New Holland Tractor

Decommission and liquidation of New Holland 1920 tractor

Staff Report Recommendation: *Decommission and authorize the disposition of the New Holland 1920, serial number UP43608*

2.5 Modification to Salary Schedule

Remove Assistant General Manager and modify Finance Analyst Positions

Staff Report Recommendation: *Remove the Assistant General Manager job title from the District's Salary Schedule. Change the job title "Finance Analyst/Clerk of the Board" found in the Salary Schedule to "Finance Manager/Clerk of the Board"*

2.6 General Rules and Regulations Temporary Amendment

Temporary suspension of rules for District events

Staff Report Recommendation: *Allow for a temporary modification to policy as described below:*

1. *Dia de los Muertos (DDL M) Oct. 28 through Nov. 4, 2024, all day – Visitor permission to decorate the full length and width of the grave site (not to exceed 36” in height).*
2. *Dia de los Muertos (DDL M) Nov. 1-2, 2024, all day – Visitor permission to bring coolers onto grounds. This variance is being requested due to the distance required to traverse from visitors’ vehicles to visitation sites, combined with time spent on grounds.*
3. *Dia de los Muertos (DDL M) Nov. 2, 2024 – Extension of closing time to 8:00 P.M.*
4. *Mexican Mother’s Day, May 10, 2025, all day - Visitor permission to bring coolers onto grounds. This variance is being requested due to the distance required to traverse from visitors’ vehicles to visitation sites, combined with time spent on grounds.*
5. *Mother’s Day, May 11, 2025, all day - Visitor permission to bring coolers onto grounds. This variance is being requested due to the distance required to traverse from visitors’ vehicles to visitation sites, combined with time spent on grounds.*
6. *Father’s Day, Jun. 15, 2025, all day - Visitor permission to bring coolers onto grounds. This variance is being requested due to the distance required to traverse from visitors’ vehicles to visitation sites, combined with time spent on grounds.*

Trustee Coronel expressed strong support for Item 2.5, commenting that Finance Analyst Winder has successfully fulfilled the vision for the position through its various revisions during its creation. Vice Chair Vossler echoed her strong support and remarked that Clerk Winder does a great job with the minutes.

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

3. ACTION ITEMS

3.1 Interment Services Policy

Adoption of policy to govern standard practices for interment services

Staff Report Recommendation: *Staff are recommending the Interment Service Policy & Procedure be adopted as presented in Exhibit A.*

GM Bonner reviewed that this item is a direct result of public comment and explained the purpose of the procedures, noting that it allows for all unexpected requests by stating that if a request is not included, it will require approval. He also mentioned the functional changes to the Regulations drop down menu on the website. Board discussion ensued.

Motion: Coronel – Move for approval
 Second: Vossler
 Yes: Rosales, Vossler, Coronel, Underwood, Rios
 Abstain: None
 No: None

Absent: None
Motion passed.

3.2 Indoor Heat Illness Prevention Policy

Policy compliance with Indoor Heat Illness Prevention Regulation CCR 3396

Staff Report Recommendation: *Staff is recommending the Board adopt the modified Heat Illness Prevention Policy as presented in Exhibit C (“Heat Illness Prevention Policy – Clean Copy”)*

GM Bonner reviewed that this item was prompted by a new Cal OSHA requirement, noting that it has been integrated into the existing Heat Illness Prevention Policy. Thermostats and logs have been added to the Maintenance Shop. Board discussion ensued.

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

3.3 Underground Infrastructure Mapping

GIS Mapping and Inventory of District Water System

Staff Report Recommendation: *Staff recommends the Board authorize GIS mapping of the District’s water system. A preliminary budget of \$15,000 for this project is requested, to be added to the budget line 6730 - Structures & Improvements, in the 2024-2025 Budget. The District will RFQ this project and return to the Board with updates if they are unable to contract the work within the requested budget.*

GM Bonner noted that this was not an urgency item, but it was an area recently highlighted by a request from the California Division of Drinking Water, which made us aware of the lack of information regarding the location and types of our water lines. GM Bonner indicated that the initial budget requirement for the assessment would be between \$10,000 and \$15,000. During board discussion, Trustee Coronel inquired about the mapping of internal electric lines and expressed a desire for those to be included in the GIS mapping. GM Bonner clarified that all future additions can be incorporated.

Motion: Coronel – Move to approve for comprehensive mapping to include internal electrical lines with an increased budget modification of \$20,000
Second: Vossler
Yes: Rosales, Vossler, Coronel, Underwood, Rios
Abstain: None
No: None
Absent: None
Motion passed.

3.4 Media Production Activities Policy

Policy governing the use of District policy for film production

Staff Report Recommendation: *Staff recommends that the Board of Trustees adopt the attached Media Production Activities Policy.*

GM Bonner reviewed the revisions made to the previous policy regarding news media. Counsel Campos noted that it now includes a definition of media and allows for the acceptance of credentialed IDs. During the Board discussion, Trustee Coronel inquired about the potential fee, to which Counsel Campos responded that no fee would be applied until officially established. GM Bonner noted the fee could be adopted with the next fee study. Trustee Coronel also asked about the policy’s impact on First Amendment Audits. GM Bonner clarified that the policy is not applicable to such audits but is designed to manage professional productions that might cause disruptions. He further noted that employees had recently attended a First Amendment Audit course, which suggested the addition of ‘Employee Only’ signage to appropriate areas.

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

3.5 Headstone Care and Maintenance

General Rules & Regulations, endowment care relationship to headstone maintenance

Staff Report Recommendation: *Staff is recommending the Board adopt the modified language as presented, and approve the revised version of the document, attached as Exhibit C (Clean Copy).*

Note, if item 3.1 of the agenda was previously approved by the Board, that language would be incorporated into the revised policy attached. Any action as presented in this item would not invalidate action taken on that item (3.1) as presented.

GM Bonner noted that this item arose from public comment. He explained that the endowment fee included with the headstone setting fee is intended for landscaping care around headstones and emphasized that this is not a new policy but rather a revision of the General Rules and Regulations as legal reviewed the matter and suggested rewording for clarity.

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

3.6 Upright Headstone Repair

Contracted service for required repair to existing upright headstone inventory

Staff Report Recommendation: *Under current policy, the care and maintenance of headstones is the responsibility of the lot owner. To the best of staff’s knowledge, this policy has not changed in the District’s history. As such, all headstones, including upright headstones, remain the responsibility of the lot owner and/or responsible party to maintain. In the case of upright headstones, that includes the care required to keep them*

safe for public display. As such, staff must recommend contacting families to inform them of the needed repair and the cost associated with it. The family would of course be free to pursue alternate vendors if they choose to perform the work.

GM Bonner addressed concerns regarding the maintenance of upright headstones, noting that only one response was received for the RFQ on headstone repairs, with a quote of \$9,800. He emphasized that maintaining the headstones is the responsibility of the families and mentioned that contact information on file for them may be inadequate. GM Bonner indicated that, depending on the families' responses or lack thereof, there are limited options available for addressing the issue. During the Board discussion, Trustees agreed that the maintenance of private property should not be assumed by the Board. No action was taken.

3.7 Columbarium Structural Inspection

Engineering review of foundation settling

Staff Report Recommendation: *Staff is recommending the engineering study be performed. Even with the current settling, sufficient movement has occurred to require foundation repair. The uneven surfaces are creating tripping hazards. We are also seeing separation in the granite itself, which will have to be addressed. It would, in the opinion of management, be better to determine the nature of the shifting now as opposed to revisited it again in the future when options to address may be more limited. If the Board agrees, they would also need to authorize an initial budget of \$20,000 to cover the work.*

GM Bonner reported that annual inspections have revealed significant settling - defined as more than ¼ inch - in the Columbarium. This has caused concrete slabs to rise, impacting the support beams. CV Engineers visited the site and confirmed the issue, recommending a structural assessment. The Maintenance Team noted that the eastern section of the cemetery has more clay in the soil. GM Bonner emphasized that, while there is no imminent danger, the concrete shift will need remediation. He suggested proceeding with the assessment, estimated at approximately \$20,000, to determine the necessary remediation steps. During the board discussion, Trustee Coronel recommended delaying the assessment until the next fiscal year, acknowledging the need for the work but preferring to postpone it. Trustee Underwood raised concerns about the concrete lifting, to which GM Bonner advised against any action without a structural assessment noting that it would be more effective to address the issue comprehensively and suggested placing cones around the area in the meantime. No action was taken, and the item will be added to the May Planning Session agenda.

3.8 Board of Trustee Compensation for Meetings and other Special Occurrences

Ordinance 09-2024 first reading

Staff Report Recommendation: *Staff recommends that the Board of Trustees introduce and conduct a first reading, by title only, of Ordinance 09-2024 entitled "AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE COACHELLA VALLEY PUBLIC CEMETERY DISTRICT INCREASING BOARD MEMBER COMPENSATION" and hold a public hearing to listen to all pertinent testimony.*

GM Bonner stated the purpose of this item is to discuss an increase in Board Member compensation, noting that there had been subsequent discussions with legal counsel regarding the issue of compounding. Counsel Campos highlighted that it has been six years since the last increase in Trustee stipends, and a 5% annual increase is permitted, noting that compounding is not allowed. This would result in a \$30 increase, bringing the compensation to \$130 per meeting. Counsel Campos also read the title of the Ordinance for the record during its first reading. GM Bonner noted that this was a public hearing, and no public comments were received. Counsel Campos added that the ordinance requires a second reading and will take effect sixty days after that reading.

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

3.9 Cafeteria Plan Contribution Adjustment

Consideration of Resolution 130

Staff Report Recommendation: *Adopt Resolution No. 130 amending the Employee Handbook and the Adoption Agreement to the Cafeteria Plan.*

GM Bonner reviewed that this item is to adopt Resolution 130, which amends the Cafeteria Plan that the Board had previously voted to increase from \$1,400 to \$1,800. Counsel Campos clarified that the Resolution adopts both the amendment to the Employee Handbook and the Cafeteria Plan. Finance Analyst Winder pointed out that the budget line adjustment requested in the staff report was misstated as \$39,000; it should be \$44,000 for the remaining ten months of the current budget cycle.

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

3.10 Resolution Approving Updated Travel and Expense Reimbursement

Resolution No. 131

Staff Report Recommendation: *Staff recommends that the Board of Trustees review and adopt Resolution No. 131 entitled “A Resolution of the Board of Trustees of the Coachella Valley Public Cemetery District Updating the Travel and Expense Reimbursement Policy.”*

GM Bonner reviewed that this item is to adopt Resolution 131, which increases the daily meal reimbursement allowance and offers greater flexibility in choosing less expensive lodging options when available, rather than mandating the use of the negotiated conference rate. During the ensuing board discussion, Trustee Coronel suggested simplifying the stipend expense report process by allowing trustees to email the information directly to the Clerk, instead of completing and submitting an expense report. GM Bonner noted that trustees are legally required to report their attendance at events during meetings to be eligible for their stipends. He further clarified that this simplified process applies only to stipend claims, and that reimbursement requests will still require the submission of an expense report.

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

Motion passed.

4. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

4.1 2024-2025 Budget Book

Final draft of the District's Budget Book for public circulation

GM Bonner presented the budget book, and Trustee Coronel mentioned that he had previously provided feedback, which GM Bonner confirmed would be implemented. GM Bonner also mentioned that the District follows a bi-annual reporting schedule to City Councils and that he will present the budget book at upcoming meetings. Additionally, 100 copies of the budget book will be printed for distribution, but they will not be mailed to the public.

4.2 Operations Ad Hoc Committee Recommendations

Off Set and Receding Headstones

GM Bonner reported that the Ad Hoc Committee met to address grounds-related issues. One concern is that headstones are being affected by tree growth. The committee recommended removing and repositioning the headstones to avoid further damage, although this would cause them to be misaligned with the row. Another issue is that headstones appear to be sinking due to sand drift accumulation. Since this problem has been neglected for many years, addressing it will require removing the headstones, leveling the ground, and reinstalling them. GM Bonner suggested considering the creation of a full-time position dedicated to headstone maintenance. These items will be presented at a future Board meeting.

4.3 CalPERS 457 Plan

Consideration of providing a 457 savings plan for employees

GM Bonner provided an overview of the CalPERS 457 savings plan, which enables employees to invest additional funds beyond their pension at no cost to the District. He sought the Board's direction to move forward with implementing the plan. The Board requested that this item be brought back for further consideration. Trustee Coronel inquired whether Trustees could also participate in the plan, to which staff responded that they were unsure and would look into it.

5. TRUSTEE/GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS

5.1 Trustee Comments and Event/Function Report Out

Chair Rosales reported attending the CSDA Annual Conference and extended congratulations on the awards received.

Vice Chair Vossler reported attending the CSDA Annual Conference, expressing her admiration for the District receiving two awards, and congratulated GM Bonner and the staff.

Trustee Coronel congratulated GM Bonner, noting that GM Bonner not only received awards, but that the District was also recognized during breakout sessions. Trustee Coronel reported attending two days of the CSDA Annual

Conference, a webinar on the federal government’s efforts to reduce administrative burden, and an online conference. He also mentioned that he will be attending the GCVCC All Valley Mayors Luncheon and the CAPC Annual Conference.

Trustee Underwood reported attending the CSDA Annual Conference, noting that the keynote session titled “What If?” was excellent. He mentioned that the second-day keynote speaker’s question about whether one’s “temperature” is red or green served as a helpful reminder for interpersonal interactions. Additionally, he attended a LAFCO session and congratulated everyone on the awards received.

Trustee Rios explained that he was unable to attend the special meeting on the audit due to personal matters and noted that he will be completing his Ethics and Harassment training.

5.2 General Manager Report

GM Bonner reviewed the GM report as presented and highlighted the addition of two new quality assessment scores for both pre- and post-service evaluations.

Adjourned to closed session at 9:49 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 9:57 a.m. and Counsel Campos reported: no reportable action.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 9:57 a.m.

NEXT MEETING TIME, DATE AND LOCATION

Friday, October 4, 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.