

Coachella Valley Public Cemetery District
Trustee Meeting Minutes
Friday, February 14, 2025
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, February 14, 2025, at 8:00 a.m.

Public Notices were posted by the Clerk of the Board on Monday, February 10, 2025, 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
Bruce Underwood, Trustee
John Rios, Trustee

Additional participants:

Josh Bonner, General Manager
Sherry Winder, Finance Manager/Clerk of the Board
Carlos Campos, General Counsel
David Turner, CV Engineers

FLAG SALUTE

MOMENT OF SILENCE

PUBLIC COMMENT

Waymond Fermon from Indio addressed the Board regarding Item 3.8.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

None

Chair Rosales adjourned the meeting to closed session at 8:03 a.m.

1. CLOSED SESSION

1.1 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

1.2 CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL – ANTICIPATED LITIGATION

Initiation of Litigation, Pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.9(4)
One (1) Potential Case

1.3 CONFERENCE WITH LABOR NEGOTIATORS

Agency Designated Representatives: Carlos Campos, General Counsel
Unrepresented Employee: Joshua Bonner, General Manager

The Board reconvened from closed session at 8:31 a.m., and Counsel Campos reported direction received, no reportable action.

2. CONSENT CALENDAR

2.1 Trustee Minutes

Board Meeting – January 10, 2025

2.2 Finance and Administration

January 2025:

- a. Approval of Expenditures – Checks and ACH transactions as detailed
- b. Investment Report

2.3 Modification to March 2024 Minutes

Adjustment to March 22, 2024, Minutes to Specify Contract Award

Staff Recommendations: *In the interest of clarity, and to avoid any future confusion over action taken at the meeting, staff are recommending the Board approve a minor alteration to the Minutes as recorded as follows: Page 2, under item 2.1 Pavement Rehabilitation, in the comments section above the Motion and Vote, first sentence.*

*GM Bonner reviewed staff report recommendations, noting that the base bid plus Alt. "C" and Alt. "D" **submitted by Command Performance Consultants** are recommended, which would require a capital budget adjustment to line item 7902.3 - Asphalt Replacement from \$500,000.00 to \$1,418,692.77.*

2.4 Information Technology Support Contract

Rescind previous approval of agreement action

Staff Recommendations: *Because the original contract with AIS was approved by the Board, staff are asking the Board to formally rescind approval of that agreement.*

Note – The new contract with Active IT Solutions does not require additional Board approval, as the dollar amount is within the spending authority of the General Manager.

2.5 Adjustment to 2024-2025 Budget

Request for additional overtime budget

Staff Recommendations: *Staff are requesting another \$5,000 in overtime budget be added to line item 6515, bringing the total for 2024-2025 to \$24, 300. This budget will primarily be utilized by the Maintenance crew to manage the elevated level of service activity, and to bring the headstone installation pipeline under control.*

Financial Analysis: *This will add an additional \$5,000 to the 2024-2025 budget.*

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

3. ACTION ITEMS

3.1 General Manager Contract

Consideration of General Manager contract

Staff Recommendations: Staff is recommending the Board approve the contract as presented in Exhibit C of this report. Staff is further recommending the following corresponding adjustments to the 2024-2025 budget:

6505 Payroll: Adjust to \$1,004,092.99 (+\$12,750)

6520 Cafeteria Plan: Adjust to \$302,800 (-\$7,200)

6525 HCE Benefits (New Line Item): \$19,242.45

Financial Analysis: The proposed Agreement will have the following impact to the current budget if approved by the Board as of February 14, 2025. 2024-2025 Budget total impact: \$24,792.45

The revised Agreement will impact applicable future budgets as follows:

Salary: \$199,000 per year

Health: Full cost depending on benefit offerings and full year premiums (currently \$32,727.36)

Education: \$15,000 per year

457 Plan: \$10,000 per year

Discussion: Counsel Campos reviewed the restated contract for the General Manager, noting that while there were previous amendments, the original contract dated back to 2021 and contained outdated language, warranting an update. Key provisions include an extension through May 2028, an annual salary of \$199,000, health coverage for the employee and family, a \$10,000 annual contribution to employee's CalPERS 457 plan, and a \$15,000 annual education allowance. The contract also specifies a four-fifths vote requirement for removal, a six-month freeze on termination by new board members, and a 12-month severance package. Minor revisions were made, including cleanup of language related to attorney fees and the severability clause. The contract's effective date is set for February 15, 2025, aligning with the district's pay period. Additionally, the board requested modifications to Section 5A to clarify that payments are made monthly and Section 5E to specify that the education allowance is separate from professional development expenses.

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

GM Bonner thanked the Board and recognized the accomplishments achieved through their collaborative efforts.

Finance Manager Winder presented the Board with a revised salary schedule reflecting the General Manager's new salary, noting that formal adoption and approval are required to ensure compliance with CalPERS.

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

3.2 Mission Statement Review

Review of current Mission Statement and consideration of possible revisions

Staff Recommendations: *Staff has drafted the following for the Board to consider based on feedback received at the January Board meeting:*

Mission Statement

The Coachella Valley Public Cemetery District provides reasonably priced cemetery services to residents within our service area. By operating with transparency and sound governance, and serving the needs of a diverse community, the District ensures that the cemetery remains a meaningful space for remembrance, reflection and celebration, designed to serve generations in perpetuity.

Core Values

Dedication: *Provide services in a manner that is competent, courteous, and responsive.*

Excellence: *Strive for excellence through measurable, documented achievements.*

Fiduciary Responsibility: *Provide the highest quality service at a fair and equitable fee.*

Integrity: *Act ethically and honestly.*

Professional Development: *Continuously learn best practices, while developing and implementing innovation.*

Respect: *Treat constituents, partners and employees with mutual respect, sensitivity and empathy.*

Teamwork: *Support, trust, value, and empower our colleagues.*

Transparency: *Believe in an open government where information and documents are easily accessible to the public.*

Discussion: GM Bonner reviewed the revisions requested in January 2025 and presented to the Board for review. During the discussion, the Board noted that the word "our" was still present in the business document and suggested replacing it with "the" or "District" for consistency.

Under Core Values, the following recommendations were made:

- Teamwork: Remove "our" from "our colleagues", with a suggestion to use "team colleagues" instead.
- Professional Development: Replace "learn" with "use".
- Transparency: Replace the word "believe" with "Conduct open government".

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

3.3 Day-of Services Payment

Payment for property or services the day-of by funeral homes

Staff Recommendations: *Staff recommends the following revisions to the District’s policies:*

Revision to the “General Rules and Regulations” Policy:

“No interment may be made until all charges for lots and services have been paid in full at least 24 hours before the service is scheduled to take place at the cemetery. Funeral homes that have been approved by the District Board of Trustees may provide payment for interment services on the day of the service, but only before any services are performed, in accordance with the terms outlined in the District’s Financial Policy.”

Coachella Valley Public Cemetery District

Proposed Language for the District’s Financial Policy:

Third-Party Transactions

(a) Statement of Policy:

The District may allow funeral homes to act as third-party fiduciaries on behalf of families wishing to conduct business with the District. Funeral homes must be approved by the District Board of Trustees in advance to provide this service. The list of approved funeral homes will be reviewed and updated by the Board as necessary, but no less than once every 24 months.

(b) Qualified Funeral Homes:

To qualify as third-party fiduciaries, funeral homes must complete and execute the District’s Liability Waiver and Release Agreement and must have facilitated at least 10 services at the District within the past 12 months.

(c) Rights and Restrictions:

Approved funeral homes may issue payments for property or services on behalf of families. However, funeral homes are restricted to payment only; they may not execute agreements or legally bind families to purchase agreements with the District.

(d) Good Faith:

Funeral homes conducting financial transactions on behalf of families must do so in good faith. They must not mark up or alter District fees in any way to profit from these transactions. Any funeral home found to be engaging in such practices may have its approval to conduct third-party transactions revoked.

(e) Responsibility for Payment:

Funeral homes conducting financial transactions on behalf of families are legally responsible for ensuring that payments are made. If a payment fails due to insufficient funds or other issues, the District may charge a Rejected Payment fee of \$100 per occurrence. Repeated instances of rejected payments may result in the revocation of the funeral home’s approval to conduct third-party transactions.

Discussion: GM Bonner reviewed a proposal to revise the General Rules & Regulations to allow approved Funeral Homes to make payments on the day of service, with proposed Financial Policy language to clarify the process. To qualify, Funeral Homes must be included on a pre-approved vendor list.

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

Due to the arrival of Mr. Fermon for public comment on Item 3.8, the Board adjusted the agenda to move the item up, allowing for immediate public comment.

3.8 Request to Place Headstone

Request by Community Member(s) to place memorial marker

Staff Recommendations: Policy waivers fall solely within the authority and purview of the Board, staff have no recommendations on the waiver of an established policy.

Discussion: GM Bonner reviewed a request from a community member regarding the placement of a marker for John Nobles. Public comment was received, noting that multiple attempts to contact next of kin (NOK) had been unsuccessful, prompting a request for direction on how to proceed.

The Board explored potential solutions, including allowing the City or an organization to take responsibility for the placement of a marker. It was suggested that the Coachella Valley History Museum (CVHM) could take the lead, with a public notice recommended to attempt to locate any relatives. The Board also discussed the possibility of expanding the project in the future to assist other families within the Cemetery District and expressed support for moving forward with the effort.

GM Bonner emphasized the importance of documenting all steps taken before proceeding with the marker placement if partnering with CVHM. Concerns were also raised about whether the Nobles family had intentionally chosen not to have a marker, as some families prefer not to.

To advance the effort, the Board formed an Ad Hoc committee with Vice Chair Vossler and Trustee Coronel to collaborate on the project, with Mr. Fermon offering his personal resources to assist. Additionally, the Board discussed the broader significance of recognizing and honoring notable community members interred within the Cemetery District.

3.4 LAFCO MSR Draft Review

Review of Draft Municipal Service Review

Staff Recommendations: Staff are recommending the Board accept the recommendations of LAFCO, while keeping a close eye on the proceedings to ensure PSCD acts in kind. The financial considerations of this are discussed in more detail under Financial Analysis section.

Financial Analysis: Staff was able to assess the current property values of the SOI's (approximate) in question utilizing the County Assessor website. The area that would be removed from the District's SOI has a current taxable market value of \$2B total, residential \$925M. This area is attached as Exhibit C. The area that is

being removed from PSCD's SOI has a taxable market value of \$2.75B, residential \$1.63B. This map is attached as Exhibit D. While large portions of the Palm Desert area being removed from our SOI is undeveloped, large portions of it is also non-taxable university property. There is feasible path for that area to eventually surpass the Rancho Mirage area, but it would require much higher end development than what is currently occurring (mostly upper middle income family homes). Staff has assessed it is financially advantageous for the District to maintain its current boundaries.

Chair Rosales left at 9:08 a.m.

Discussion: GM Bonner reviewed LAFCO's draft Municipal Service Review (MSR), which provided a positive evaluation of CVPCD. Discussion focused on the Sphere of Influence for both CVPCD and Palm Springs Cemetery, with concerns raised about the recommended boundary adjustments. To further assess the issue and evaluate alternatives, the Board formed an Ad Hoc Committee consisting of Trustee Coronel, Trustee Underwood, and GM Bonner. Legal counsel was deemed necessary to support the Ad Hoc Committee in this matter. The Board also discussed concerns over language in the MSR suggesting tax imbalances, emphasizing the importance of protecting property tax values. Additionally, the Board noted that LAFCO had highly praised the MSR submission. Plans were made to submit editorial comments before the February LAFCO board meeting to ensure accurate representation in the final report.

Motion: Rios – Motion to approve with Staff Recommendations

Second: Coronel

Motion withdrawn by Trustee Rios.

3.5 Installation of Fence Along Cemetery Boundary

Request to extend fence line for new purchase

Staff Recommendations: Staff is recommending the Board approve an additional capital budget as follows:

- Approve an increase to the new fence capital budget to \$100,000 (original budget \$45,000)
- Approve \$42,000 in capital budget for the removal of the hedges and one tree along the southwestern property line.
- In accordance with the District's purchasing policy, the General Manager is requesting change order authority up to 10% (Section 3, Subsection J).

Financial Analysis: The project will add an additional \$97,000 to the 2024-2025 Capital Budget.

Discussion: GM Bonner noted that this item was being revisited due to a change in circumstances, including the removal of a tree on the northwest corner, which left an opening in the property line, and the need to address overgrown brush encroaching onto a neighboring property on the south corner. The Board was advised that the overgrown brush issue required attention, with a strong recommendation for removal, as ongoing maintenance would be cost prohibitive and require access to property not owned by the District. The proposed solution includes amending the initial fencing request from 850 feet to a total of 1,960 feet. This adjustment would require an additional \$97,000 increase to the Capital Budget.

Motion: Coronel – Move for approval

Second: Underwood

Yes: Vossler, Coronel, Underwood, Rios

Abstain: None
No: None
Absent: Rosales
Motion passed.

3.6 CalPERS Public Employees' Pension Reform Act Agreement

Update CalPERS documents to bring PEPR agreement in compliance

Staff Recommendations: *Staff is recommending the Board approve the "Resolution of Intention" as presented in Exhibit B.*

Discussion: GM Bonner reviewed that this item was being revisited from the January meeting to ensure the CalPERS Agreement is brought into compliance with PEPR.

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

3.7 CalPERS Salary Schedule(s) Adoption

Corrections regarding past salary adoptions as directed by CalPERS

Staff Recommendations: *Staff recommends that the Board individually motion to approve each of the following salary schedules, specifying the approved, adopted, and effective dates for each:*

1. Salary Schedule Presented February 11, 2020 (Exhibit B)

Approved and Adopted: February 14, 2024

Effective Date: July 1, 2019

2. Salary Schedule Presented August 6, 2021 (Exhibit C)

Approved and Adopted: February 14, 2024

Effective Date: September 21, 2021

3. Revised Salary Schedule Presented September 3, 2021 (Exhibit D)

Approved and Adopted: February 14, 2024

Effective Date: September 21, 2021

4. Salary Schedule Presented September 16, 2022 (Exhibit E)

Approved and Adopted: February 14, 2024

Effective Date: September 17, 2022

5. Revised Salary Schedule Presented June 2, 2023 (Exhibit F)

Approved and Adopted: February 14, 2024

Effective Date: July 1, 2023

Discussion: Finance Manager Winder reviewed findings from the recent CalPERS salary schedule audit, in which the District was selected for review. The audit determined that multiple salary schedules approved

over the past few years were out of alignment with CalPERS requirements for publicly available pay schedules. CalPERS required that the pay schedules be officially approved and adopted, with retroactive effective dates reflecting when they were originally intended to take effect.

The Board acknowledged that they were fully informed at the time the salary schedules were initially presented and approved for use, despite the absence of necessary details, such as an effective date, required to meet CalPERS compliance.

Motion: Coronel – Move for approval of Salary Schedule Presented February 11, 2020
Second: Underwood
Yes: Vossler, Coronel, Underwood, Rios
Abstain: None
No: None
Absent: Rosales
Motion passed.

Motion: Coronel – Move for approval of Salary Schedule Presented August 6, 2021
Second: Underwood
Yes: Vossler, Coronel, Underwood, Rios
Abstain: None
No: None
Absent: Rosales
Motion passed.

Motion: Coronel – Move for approval of Revised Salary Schedule Presented September 3, 2021
Second: Underwood
Yes: Vossler, Coronel, Underwood, Rios
Abstain: None
No: None
Absent: Rosales
Motion passed.

Motion: Coronel – Move for approval of Salary Schedule Presented September 16, 2022
Second: Underwood
Yes: Vossler, Coronel, Underwood, Rios
Abstain: None
No: None
Absent: Rosales
Motion passed.

Motion: Coronel – Move for approval of Revised Salary Schedule Presented June 2, 2023
Second: Underwood
Yes: Vossler, Coronel, Underwood, Rios
Abstain: None
No: None
Absent: Rosales
Motion passed.

Adjourn for recess at 9:42 a.m.
Return from recess at 9:48 a.m.

4. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

4.1 Adjustment to Staffing

Creation of additional positions or modified job duties for existing staff

Discussion: GM Bonner reviewed that this item consolidates multiple discussions, including concerns over staffing delays, such as a five-week wait for a pre-need appointment, which recently led to customer frustration being escalated to a Trustee. He noted that while the District operates efficiently, deficiencies can arise quickly when service delays extend too far. In comparison to the Orange County Cemetery District, he highlighted that their staffing levels are twice as large, despite only a \$1 million budget difference.

GM Bonner emphasized the value of an Assistant General Manager (AGM) for succession planning and ensuring leadership coverage when the General Manager is unavailable. He suggested that rather than creating a new position, the AGM role could be integrated into an existing position within the District.

He also addressed the Cemetery Services Team's need for additional support to reduce long appointment wait times. To address this, he proposed creating a full-time administrative position dedicated to Cemetery Services, which would also help alleviate the Finance Department's workload, as the current Administrative Assistant spends five hours daily assisting Cemetery Services. This adjustment would allow for a full-time finance position, replacing the current Administrative Assistant role.

Additionally, he noted that while interment numbers may appear unchanged, the addition of new policies has increased workflow demands, which may not be immediately reflected in standard metrics.

The Board requested that GM Bonner bring back a proposal outlining staffing changes and budget needs for consideration at a future Board meeting.

4.2 Finance and Administration Policy

Recommendation to consolidate finance related policy

GM Bonner noted the value of establishing a standalone Finance policy, as one is not currently in place. He proposed developing a consolidated financial policy book that would compile existing financial policies while allowing for the inclusion of additional policies as needed. The Board expressed support for this future action.

4.3 Repair of Upright Headstones

Update on communication to responsible parties

GM Bonner reviewed that Step 1 of the process to contact families for the repair of upright headstones has been completed, with letters mailed to property owners on record. However, as anticipated due to the age of the records on file, the majority were returned as undeliverable. As the next step, which was agreed to at

previous Board meetings, the District will work through legal counsel to proceed with public notices to reach families who could not be contacted. The Board expressed their continued support for the plan.

4.4 Purchasing and Contract Policy

Increase to General Manager spending authority

GM Bonner reviewed that the General Manager's spending authority was approved over three years ago and recommended an increase from \$15,000 to \$30,000. This adjustment would ensure that all expenditures within the informal quote threshold remain under the General Manager's authority, while amounts exceeding this limit would remain under the Board's authority. The Board expressed support for this action and gave instructions to bring it back as an action item at the next Board meeting.

4.5 LAFCO Proposed Rate Increase

Revision to Local Agency Formation Commission rates

GM Bonner reviewed the LAFCO rate increase and presented it to the Board for consideration, allowing them the opportunity to review and provide a statement at the upcoming LAFCO meeting, if desired. The Board concluded that the increases were reasonable, but did not express a desire for the District to issue public comment.

5. TRUSTEE/GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS

5.1 Trustee Comments and Event/Function Report Out

Vice Chair Vossler commended the General Manager's report and noted availability to sign checks on Fridays once again.

Trustee Coronel proposed establishing quarterly meetings with RSO leadership to address concerns, with Vice Chair Vossler and GM Bonner expressing interest in attending. He reported attending the CSDA Riverside Chapter meeting in Jurupa Valley with Trustee Underwood, noting strong Coachella Valley representation. He also completed his bi-annual Ethics and Harassment trainings and expressed appreciation for the work of Finance Manager Winder. He noted a constituent concern was raised about headstone placement delays of 5-6 weeks. GM Bonner clarified that the current wait time is 2-3 weeks, with efforts to maintain placement within 5-8 business days after receiving the headstone. Trustee Coronel stated that he joined the GCVCC Legislative Committee and raised awareness about an Indio councilmember advocating for a separate City Chamber apart from GCVCC. He emphasized the importance of the District supporting GCVCC and maintaining a regional advocacy presence. It was recommended that the Board have the ability to advocate on behalf of the District and that GM Bonner be reinstated to his previous Board seat for that purpose. GM Bonner agreed to serve if that was the wish of the Board. Appreciation was expressed for the staff member currently filling the role. He reported that Prop 1 funding is available through the State Conservancy, and GM Bonner suggested it could help fund the transition of District buildings off well water. With GM Bonner's appointment to the CSDA Legislative Committee and his agreement to serve on the Chamber Board, Trustee Coronel was recommended as his replacement on the Special District Association of Riverside County (SDARC) board and will be assuming the position. GM Bonner expressed his appreciation for this move, as it helps balance his workload.

Trustee Underwood reported attending a CALAFCO Zoom meeting, a CVEP meeting, and a fundraising meeting for The Unforgettables Foundation. Additionally, he met with Assemblymember Gonzalez during a District visit and Senator Rosalicio Ochoa Bogh, expressing optimism about their support in advancing initiatives at the State level.

Trustee Rios stated he regularly visits the Cemetery, typically twice a week, to stay engaged with the overall condition and needs of the grounds.

5.2 General Manager Report

GM Bonner reminded the Board to be mindful when submitting reports, ensuring that dates are not altered and that items are only submitted after completion. He requested that the Board block their calendars for the full four-hour Planning Session on May 9th, emphasizing the need for the full session duration.

Key GM report highlights included:

- Niche projections indicating they will be sold out by the end of next year at the current run rate.
- The Master Plan is nearing completion, and a study session is proposed for Friday, March 7th, at 8 a.m.
- An audit update will be presented at the next Board meeting.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Coronel – Motion for adjournment

Second: Rios

Yes: Vossler, Coronel, Underwood, Rios

Abstain: None

No: None

Absent: Rosales

Motion passed.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:34 a.m.

NEXT MEETING TIME, DATE AND LOCATION

Friday, March 21, 2025

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.