

Coachella Valley Public Cemetery District

Trustee Meeting Minutes

Friday, March 21, 2025

8:00 a.m.

A meeting of the governing Board of the Coachella Valley Public Cemetery District (“District”) was held at the CVPCD Executive Office, located at 82847 Avenue 52, Coachella, CA 92236 on Friday, March 21, 2025, at 8:00 a.m.

Public Notices were posted by the Clerk of the Board on Monday, March 17, 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

FLAG SALUTE

MOMENT OF SILENCE

PUBLIC COMMENT

Guillermo De La Torre from Indio thanked the Board for their support during his tenure at CVPCD and announced his resignation from the District.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Item 3.6 Federal Financial Assistance for Road Construction Project

GM Bonner requested that Item 3.6 be added as an update regarding newly received information on federal earmark funding, which became available after the agenda was posted.

Motion: Coronel – Move for approval

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

Meeting was adjourned to closed session at 8:08 a.m.

1. CLOSED SESSION ITEMS

1.1 PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Title: General Manager

Meeting resumed from closed session at 8:45 a.m.

Counsel Campos reported no reportable action.

2. CONSENT CALENDAR

2.1 Trustee Minutes

Board Meeting – February 14, 2025
Special Board Meeting – February 28, 2025
Special Board Meeting – March 7, 2025

2.2 Finance and Administration

January 2025:

a. Budget to Actual

February 2025:

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

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

3. ACTION ITEMS

3.1 Purchasing and Contract Policy

Amendments to Purchasing and Contracting Policy to Increase the General Manager's Purchasing Authority

Staff Recommendations: *Staff is recommending the Board adopt Resolution 133 as presented, attached as Exhibit B.*

Financial Analysis: *There is no known financial impact resulting from this action.*

Discussion: GM Bonner reported that this item was carried over from the May Planning Session and involves a proposed increase to the General Manager's spending authority—from \$15,000 to \$30,000—based on the size and operational needs of the District. The proposed amount remains within the threshold for informal quotes. Approval is requested for the revised policy and Resolution 133.

Motion: Rios – Move for approval of Resolution 133
Second: Coronel
Yes: Rosales, Vossler, Coronel, Underwood, Rios
Abstain: None
No: None
Absent: None
Motion passed.

3.2 Amendment to CalPERS Agreement

Required contract updates to reflect current legal requirements under PEPR

Staff Recommendations: *Staff recommends that the Board adopt Resolution No. 134 as presented, authorizing an amendment to the District's contract with CalPERS. This amendment updates the contract language to align with PEPR requirements and directs the Chairman to execute the CalPERS Contract Amendment attached.*

Financial Analysis: *There is no known financial impact from this action.*

Discussion: GM Bonner reported that this item represents the final step in the adjustment to the District's CalPERS agreement, which is necessary for PEPR benefits.

Motion: Coronel – Move for approval of Resolution 134
Second: Rios
Yes: Rosales, Vossler, Coronel, Underwood, Rios
Abstain: None
No: None
Absent: None
Motion passed.

3.3 Niche Disinterment Fee

Request to establish specific cost for the removal of an urn from the columbarium

Staff Recommendations: Staff is recommending the Board establish a fee for columbarium disinterment of \$385. This fee would be revisited when the fee study is conducted in July of 2025.

Financial Analysis: Financial impact to the District would be \$385 per occurrence. Annual impact would be minimal as very few of these requests are received.

Discussion: GM Bonner reported that this item originated from a public request. He explained that the District’s previous fee study did not include a specific fee for niche disinterment, only a general disinterment fee of \$2,925. In response to constituent needs, this item was brought forward as an action item, with a recommended niche disinterment fee of \$385. It was clarified that the District does not resell previously used lots or niches, and that a permit for the disposition of human remains is required for any disinterment.

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

3.4 Landscape Services Contract

Review of landscape contract and potential change to services

Staff Recommendations: The District’s current landscaping contract does not fully meet operational needs, requiring updates to mowing schedules, irrigation management, headstone maintenance, and contractor accountability. Staff recommends attempting to renegotiate the existing contract under these revised terms and within the current price structure or, if necessary, returning to RFP to ensure a more effective agreement.

Requested Action:

- Authorize the General Manager to renegotiate the landscape contract under the proposed terms.
- If renegotiation is unsuccessful, authorize the General Manager to issue a new RFP for landscaping services.

Financial Analysis: The proposed contract modifications may result in cost adjustments, particularly if additional staffing or accountability measures are factored into pricing. However, reducing total mow days and enforcing compliance incentives may create cost savings and operational efficiencies. If renegotiation leads to a significant cost increase, the District will need to evaluate cost effectiveness before returning to RFP.

Discussion: GM Bonner stated that the District has completed two RFP processes using an outdated template that predates his tenure. He identified several areas for improvement,

including completing mowing in a single day, clarifying the mowing schedule, and improving hedging practices. He also recommended better scheduling for irrigation and seeding—based on weather conditions rather than events—and addressing contract changes, particularly around holidays, in advance. He suggested that landscaping crews assist with flower pickup on mowing days under staff supervision.

GM Bonner requested authority to renegotiate the current contract or, if necessary, initiate a new RFP should the agreement be terminated. The Board questioned the need to renegotiate with the contract set to expire in October, but GM Bonner explained that it includes two built-in extension options, warranting a proactive review.

Motion: Coronel – Motion to authorize GM to renegotiate existing contract
Second: Rios
Yes: Rosales, Vossler, Coronel, Underwood, Rios
Abstain: None
No: None
Absent: None
Motion passed.

3.5 Additional Administrative Staff and Temporary Adjustments to Existing Staff

Request for adjustments to deal with increased workflow and anticipated temporary shortages in staff

***Staff Recommendations:** Staff is recommending the Board take the following actions:*

1. Authorize the General Manager to create the Finance Specialist position and approve budget in the amount of \$26,770.27 for the 2024-2025 budget cycle. Note – If approved a new Pay Schedule will be presented at the next Board meeting.

2. Authorize the General Manager to create a Seasonal (one year), Part-time Administrative Assistant Position and approve budget in the amount of \$11,870.39 for the 2024-2025 budget cycle.

3. The General Manager will be initiating an Out-of-Class appointment for the current Administrative Assistant to assume the role of Cemetery Services Specialist as needed based on headcount shortfall resulting from an extended employee leave action. The appointment shall not exceed six (6) months in duration without additional Board budget approval. The Board is being asked to approve \$2,545.50 (assuming 2 months in 2024/2025) in budget for the 2024-2025 budget to cover the appointment.

***Financial Analysis:** The impact to the 2024-2025 fiscal year budget by the three proposed actions would be \$41,186.16. This would be partially offset by anticipated savings of \$31,878.43 in the 2024-2025 budget from a voluntary reduction in force. Note – additional savings are possible from anticipated short-term leave but cannot be certain until leave time is designated and utilized (paid/non-paid). The projected impact to the 2025/2026 Budget would be as follows: Finance Specialist – \$118,029.42; Administrative Assistant – \$21,899.19; Out-of-Class appointment (assuming 4 months) – \$5,091.00; Total – \$145,019.61.*

Discussion: GM Bonner stated that the Board has authorized 12.5 staff positions and noted that, while the District operates efficiently with about 40% administrative staffing (compared to 60% at similar districts), the workload remains high. To help address this, he recommended adding a full-time Finance Specialist and a part-time, 12-month seasonal position for administrative support. He is also initiating an out-of-class appointment for the Administrative Assistant to temporarily support Cemetery Services during a staff member's extended leave. GM Bonner noted that this request is for budget adjustment only, and that staffing decisions will be managed as needed under his authority.

Motion: Coronel – Authorize the General Manager to create the Finance Specialist position and approve budget in the amount of \$26,770.27 for the 2024-2025 budget cycle.
Authorize the General Manager to create a Seasonal (one year), Part-time Administrative Assistant Position and approve budget in the amount of \$11,870.39 for the 2024-2025 budget cycle.
Approve a budget adjustment of \$2,545.50 for the purpose of an out-of-class appointment within the District.

Second: Underwood

Yes: Rosales, Vossler, Coronel, Underwood, Rios

Abstain: None

No: None

Absent: None

Motion passed.

3.6 Federal Financial Assistance for Road Construction Project

Staff Recommendations: *Staff are neutral on this subject, as the calculation is largely based on constituent representation (political decision). Rather than make a recommendation, we prefer to present the pros and cons of each approach.*

Pursuing Additional Funding Pro's:

- *The project should be strongly positioned for 2026 approval based on it passing through the appropriations committee(s) the year prior.*
- *The funding would be a significant savings to the District, and constituents through reduced fee calculations in future rates studies.*

Pursuing Additional Funding Con's:

- *Funding is not guaranteed, and the current trajectory of Washington DC is heavily centered around cost savings and reduction in the federal budget, which does not favor earmarks of this nature.*
- *The road project would be delayed for at least another year, with further deterioration and inconveniences to visitors.*
- *Potential issues with the contractor may arise from further delays, up to and including termination of agreement and request for financial remediation (damages).*

Financial Analysis: *Staff cannot reasonably calculate the impact of delays on contractor fees. As material cost would be the most significant area of impact, those cost fluctuations can only be*

assessed in real time based on market rates.

We can assess that an additional year of contracted lobby services would cost the District \$30,000. This fee could potentially be cut in half if the District chooses to focus solely on federal lobbying efforts.

Discussion: GM Bonner reported that federal earmarks have been removed from FY 2025 budget discussions, delaying the District’s road project by at least a year. He noted that projects approved in 2025 may receive priority in the 2026 budget. District funding for the project remains set aside in the Capital Outlay Fund, should the Board choose to move forward without external support. GM Bonner also noted rising material and labor costs, with oil prices expected to decline but labor costs continuing to rise. He also addressed lobbyist services, noting that the District currently retains both state and federal lobbyists. The Board directed staff to discontinue the state lobbyist, retain the federal lobbyist, and continue seeking funding opportunities.

4. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

4.1 District Fee Study

Contract to conduct fee study as directed by District Governance Policy

Discussion: GM Bonner stated that the District has contracted with Willdan Financial, with work scheduled to begin on July 1, 2025. This timeline will allow the District to budget according to Willdan’s exact fees.

4.2 Tree Care and Upkeep

Addressing issues with unused interment sites adjacent to mature trees

Discussion: GM Bonner explained that in newer sections of the cemetery, the District has stopped selling burial lots adjacent to trees to allow root systems to fully develop. However, many previously sold lots are still located directly next to trees. He suggested that the Board consider offering incentives to families who own those lots to voluntarily relocate, as burials in those areas could damage the tree roots, leading to the loss of mature trees and their valuable shade. The Board directed staff to work with legal counsel to develop a plan for potential buy-back incentives.

4.3 10-Year Master Plan Draft

Review and recommendation for 30-day public comment period

Discussion: GM Bonner reported that the 10-Year Master Plan is ready to be submitted for a 30-day public comment period. He stated that city officials will be notified, and the District will use its communication channels to invite public feedback.

5. COMMITTEE UPDATES

5.1 LAFCO MSR Ad Hoc Committee

Discussion: Trustee Coronel noted that the LAFCO MSR Ad Hoc Committee has met and that LAFCO's published agenda appears favorable to the District. He also pointed out that a non-government website may have inaccurately listed the formal date of the Palm Springs Cemetery District. Trustee Coronel and GM Bonner plan to attend the upcoming LAFCO meeting in person.

5.2 Nobles Headstone Ad Hoc Committee

Discussion: Trustee Coronel and Vice Chair Vossler noted the committee is awaiting action from Waymond Fermon and that no new information has been received. Trustee Coronel recommended dissolving the committee if no update is provided by the next meeting.

6. TRUSTEE/GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS

6.1 Trustee Comments and Event/Function Report Out

Chair Rosales reported that he attended the CAPC Annual Conference and participated in the golf tournament. He stated that it was a successful conference and shared that he was unanimously re-elected to the CAPC Board. Chair Rosales noted that he was frequently asked when CVPCD could or should assume leadership of CAPC.

Vice Chair Vossler commended both the GM Report and the minutes.

Trustee Coronel reported attending an online webinar hosted by the National Center for Public Performance; a meeting with Indio Councilmember Waymond Fermon; a LAFCO meeting; a presentation by Riverside Mayor Patricia Dawson; the CSDA *Leadership Lessons with Board Members* workshop; the California CLASS Economic Update Program; the GCVCC Legislative Committee meeting; and the CAPC Annual Conference.

Trustee Underwood reported attending the Indian Wells City meeting; a meeting with Trustee Coronel and Gary Thompson regarding LAFCO; a Coachella Valley meeting focused on homelessness; and a meeting with GM Bonner and Trustee Coronel regarding LAFCO. He also attended a session focused on organizational improvement and noted that he is working to obtain a document related to a personality assessment tool that may be helpful in the hiring process. Additionally, he attended a Desert Recreation District meeting and met with the District's federal lobbyist as well as several prominent state lobbyists.

6.2 General Manager Report March 1, 2025

GM Bonner reported that CSDA has invited him to teach a class at the General Manager Conference in June. He also shared that he will be taking a few weeks off in May, as his son is graduating and getting married in South Carolina. He is expected to be away for approximately three weeks. GM Bonner noted the need to schedule a special meeting for Board approval of the audit.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 10:12 a.m.

NEXT MEETING TIME, DATE AND LOCATION

Special Meeting

Monday, March 31, 2025

8:00 a.m.

Regular Board Meeting

Friday, April 11, 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.