

Coachella Valley Public Cemetery District
Board of Trustee Meeting Minutes
Friday, April 11, 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, April 11, 2025, at 8:00 a.m.

Public Notices were posted by the Clerk of the Board on Monday, April 7, 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 *(arrived at 8:05 am)*
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

Public Comment was received from Victor Duran via email and was distributed to the Board of Trustees.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

1) Item 2.5 Tree and Brush Removal Agreement

GM Bonner reported that the RFP committee finalized its decision after the agenda was posted and that the proposal amount exceeds the General Manager's spending authority. Counsel Campos confirmed the item could be added to the agenda.

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

1. CONSENT CALENDAR

1.1 Trustee Minutes

Board Meeting – March 21, 2025
Special Board Meeting – March 31, 2025

1.2 Finance and Administration

March 2025:

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

1.3 Fence Installation Request for Proposals

Procurement Method Adjustment

Staff Recommendations: *Staff recommends that the Board authorize the General Manager to procure the fence installation project via a Request for Proposals (RFP) process, rather than under public works bidding requirements.*

Financial Analysis: *There is no change to the previously approved project budget. This action pertains solely to the procurement method.*

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

2. ACTION ITEMS

2.1 Endowment Care Interest Policy

Policy directing the review and placement of endowment care interest revenue

Staff Recommendations: *Staff is recommending the following language be incorporated into the District's Investment Policy as "Section 15":*

Endowment Care Interest

Endowment Care Interests shall be transferred into its own investment account on a monthly basis by the plan administrator. The investment account shall be reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees at the May Board meeting. At that time, the Board will give direction to staff on how to expend the money accrued over the previous year. The Board may direct the money be allocated in any manner allowed by law, including placement into any acceptable investment account or designation for an appropriate District related purpose.

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

Discussion: GM Bonner noted that the District does not currently have a policy for handling these funds and recommended creating an annual review process or setting a threshold to trigger a review. After discussion, the Board directed that the funds be reviewed annually.

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

2.2 Employee Handbook Updates and Revisions

Annual legal review and adoption of required changes

Staff Recommendations: *Staff are recommending the Board approve the revised Employee Handbook as presented in Exhibit A.*

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

Discussion: GM Bonner reported that the employee handbook is reviewed annually by Best Best & Krieger for legal updates and that suggested revisions have been made as part of the current review. He shared that HR consultants recommended grandfathering in current employees with pending disability accommodation cases under the former section 8.1(4).

During discussion, it was clarified that all employees will receive the updated handbook and must return a signed acknowledgment. GM Bonner encouraged the Board to review the redlined version provided by legal counsel for any items they may want to revisit. The Board requested a legal review to determine whether the handbook reflects only minimum legal requirements for leave or includes provisions that go beyond those requirements.

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

2.3 Pension Funding Policy

Proposed policy for annual pension review and funding

Staff Recommendations: *Staff recommends the Board adopt the Pension Funding Policy as presented.*

Financial Analysis: *The proposed policy does not obligate any specific expenditure but sets a discretionary cap to ensure fiscal flexibility. Payments under this policy will be evaluated each year during the budget process and only made if fiscally prudent.*

Discussion: GM Bonner reported that this item came from a Board request to address long-term pension liabilities. He noted that the District does not currently have a pension funding policy and presented a proposed policy to guide how and when the Board reviews pension obligations. He added that implementing the policy would require setting up a trust account with CalPERS.

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

2.4 Memorial Item Weight Restrictions

Policy restricting maximum weight of memorial items in cemetery

Staff Recommendations: *Staff is recommending the Board approve the following amendment (addition) to the District's "General Rules and Regulations":*

To ensure the safety of staff and the integrity of cemetery operations, all memorial items placed on grave sites must not exceed 10 pounds in total weight. Large, heavy, or oversized items that cannot be safely lifted and removed by a single staff member may be subject to removal without notice.

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

Discussion: GM Bonner invited the Board to lift a recovered memorial item weighing about 19 lbs to show the weight of items often left on the grounds. He explained that while the current policy is to remove and dispose of items left after mow day, staff has been retaining items with apparent high monetary value—such as prefabricated memorial pieces—as a courtesy to families.

These items are stored in a holding area but returning them requires both Maintenance and Cemetery Services staff to lift items over 10 lbs., which can fall outside their job duties. Moving forward, GM Bonner recommended disposing of any items left after mowing that weigh more than 10 lbs.

The Board supported the 10-lb threshold and stressed the need to clearly communicate the policy to the public. Suggestions included adding size and material guidelines and updating notification cards and signage.

Motion: Coronel – Move for approval as presented
Second: Rios

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

2.5 Tree and Brush Removal Agreement

Staff Recommendations: *Staff is recommending the Board approve the contract as presented.*

Financial Analysis: *The total cost of this agreement is \$40,235.00.*

Discussion: GM Bonner reported that the RFQ for tree and brush removal is not considered a public works project, according to legal counsel, as it does not involve an improvement. The lowest bid received was \$40,235, with a second bid of \$41,860 submitted by an Indio-based company—4% higher and within the range allowed by the District’s local vendor preference policy.

The Board questioned whether the local vendor had requested the preference in their bid. GM Bonner confirmed they had not, though they are aware of the policy. The Board requested that future RFPs and RFQs include language about the local vendor preference to ensure clarity for all bidders.

Following discussion, the Board requested that staff apply the local vendor preference and award the contract to the Indio-based company.

Motion: Coronel – Move to exercise discretion and grant the 5% local business preference approving Southwest Landscape, LLC
Second: Underwood
Yes: Rosales, Vossler, Coronel, Underwood, Rios
Abstain: None
No: None
Absent: None
Motion passed.

3. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

3.1 Legislative Action Update

Positions of support for AB 259 and SB496

Discussion: GM Bonner reported that staff recently supported two legislative items—AB 259 and SB 496—and provided informational letters to the Trustees. AB 259 would allow Boards to continue using Zoom for meetings. SB 496 addresses the clean fleet mandate by creating an appeals board for districts that are unable to comply with the requirement.

3.2 Vehicle Use and Availability

Current fleet designation and additional needs

Discussion: GM Bonner requested guidance from the Board on the use of District vehicles for out-of-area training and travel. He noted that the District does not currently have a vehicle well-suited for this purpose, leading to increased use of the GM's Explorer, as the F-150 is less practical for regular commuting.

Following discussion, the Board directed the GM to trade in the F-150, retain the Explorer for District use, and purchase a new, smaller truck for the General Manager.

3.3 Fraud Protection Measures

Update on available bank sponsored protection measures

Discussion: GM Bonner reviewed the fraud protection options offered by Wells Fargo to safeguard the District's accounts. Finance Manager Winder noted that while all options require daily check-ins with the bank—which is not ideal—only the Positive Pay option provides coverage for both checks and ACH transactions. The item will be brought back at a future meeting with a staff recommendation.

3.4 Interment Guidelines for Smaller Plots

Interment allowance in ¼ and ½ lots

Discussion: GM Bonner reported that while the District has a policy for the number of human remains allowed in a full-size lot, there is no current guidance for ¼ and ½ lots. He noted that the current practice has been as follows:

- ¼ Lots – Up to two (2) urns or one (1) infant vault
- ½ Lots – Up to four (4) urns or one (1) baby vault and one (1) urn

The Board agreed that the current practice is acceptable and requested staff bring back a formal policy. The Board also directed staff to include an option allowing up to four (4) urn vaults as one of the approved burial combinations for a full-size lot.

The Board also discussed the administrative time involved in coordinating multiple burials held at the same time. Staff confirmed that there is currently no additional charge for multiple openings and closings performed on the same day and noted this will be reviewed in the upcoming fee study.

4. COMMITTEE UPDATES

4.1 LAFCO MSR Ad Hoc Committee

Discussion: Trustees Underwood and Coronel met to discuss moving forward with annexation efforts following LAFCO approval. The Ad Hoc Committee recommended beginning the annexation process as soon as possible to support long-term planning and generate additional tax revenue. Trustee Coronel provided an update on the recent LAFCO meeting, noting that the Board unanimously approved keeping current boundaries in place, despite staff recommendations. The item will be reviewed again in five years, and he emphasized the importance of acting promptly, including reaching out to the Palm Springs Cemetery District.

GM Bonner stated that annexation could be added to the next meeting agenda. He shared that LAFCO had encouraged Riverside County cemetery districts to meet and discuss boundary alignment. GM Bonner committed to contacting and inviting the other districts to a meeting.

4.2 Nobles Headstone Ad Hoc Committee

Discussion: Trustee Coronel reported that there was no new information to share and recommended dissolving the committee.

5. TRUSTEE/GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS

5.1 Trustee Comments and Event/Function Report Out

Trustee Coronel requested that an item be placed on the May meeting agenda to consider forming an Ad Hoc Committee to discuss annexation. He shared that he recently met with the County Supervisor, who expressed support for the direction of the District. Trustee Coronel also attended a Fourth District Community Council meeting related to John Nobles and suggested that Trustee Underwood consider attending in the future to speak on issues concerning government performance. Additionally, Vice Chair Vossler, GM Bonner, and Trustee Coronel met with Lt. Vasquez from the Riverside County Sheriff's Office.

Trustee Underwood reported attending the Indian Wells State of the City and a City update presented by the Indian Wells City Manager. He also attended the Valley Sanitary District open house, which included participation from other special districts. He expressed support for paying down the District's pension and OPEB liabilities.

5.2 General Manager Report

April 1, 2025

GM Bonner reminded the Board to respond promptly regarding travel arrangements for upcoming events. He also noted that, per the District's existing travel policy, lower-cost options should be used when available. Additionally, if any points or incentives are earned through bookings, their value must be reimbursed to the District.

GM Bonner informed the Board that he will be unavailable for the May 9, 2025, meeting due to his son's graduation being rescheduled to that date. In response, the Board requested that the May Planning Session be moved to Saturday, May 3, 2025.

Additional updates included a federal funding update placed in Board folders noting that Congressman Ruiz will resubmit the District's funding request, a public hearing notice received regarding a neighboring property owner's reclassification request, and confirmation that feedback on the Master Plan has been distributed to surrounding cities.

*Meeting was adjourned to closed session at 9:58 a.m.
Vice Chair Vossler left at 9:58 a.m.*

6. CLOSED SESSION ITEMS

6.1 PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Title: General Manager

6.2 CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL

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

One (1) Potential Claim

Meeting resumed from closed session at 10:10 a.m.

Counsel Campos reported received direction, no reportable action.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 10:10 a.m.

NEXT MEETING TIME, DATE AND LOCATION

Saturday, May 3, 2025

8:00 a.m.

Best Best & Krieger LLP

74760 Highway 111, Suite 100

Indian Wells, CA 92210

Respectfully Submitted,
Sherry Winder
Clerk of the Board

Approved: _____ BOT Mtg.