



**CITY OF DENISON
CEMETERY ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES**

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Announce the presence of a quorum.

Board Members present were Board Chair Kris McKinney, Board Member Anne Gary, Board member Obie Greenleaf, and Board member Janet Gott. Vice Chair Horace Groff was not present.

Staff present were Justin Eastwood, Director of Parks and Recreation, Chip Egger, Parks Administrative Superintendent, Virginia Cantrell, Management Assistant of Parks and Recreation, Victor Ricano, Foreman of Fairview Cemetery, and Sherry Chance-Parrish, Administrative Assistant of Fairview Cemetery.

1. CALL TO ORDER

CALL TO ORDER

A. Board Chair Kris McKinney called the meeting to order at 2:01 PM.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No Request to Speak Cards were returned to the City Clerk by this point in the meeting. Therefore, no public comments were received.

3. ITEMS FOR INDIVIDUAL CONSIDERATION

A. Receive a report, hold a discussion, and take action on approving the Minutes from the Cemetery Advisory Board Meeting held on November 14, 2023.

Board Action

On motion by Board member Janet Gott, seconded by Board Member Obie Greenleaf, the Cemetery Advisory Board unanimously approved the Minutes from the Cemetery Advisory Board Meeting held on November 14, 2023.

B. Receive a report, hold a discussion, and take action on the selection of the color and style of brick or rock for the columns in the Cemetery Fence Project.

Board Action

Chip Egger provided a presentation to illustrate the color and style of brick or rock for the Fence Project. He explained that the manufacturers no longer provide physical samples of the products, so he put together a slide show to give the Board an idea of how each type might appear in the columns.

He explained that the bricks and rocks chosen for the presentation were chosen based on their appearance in the cemetery as well as their local and sustained availability. The examples were to be chosen for the column entrances and gates at both Magnolia and Fairview. The Board had previously agreed on the column and cap styles.

The styles he illustrated were called Dartford (gray tones), Gettysburg (gray and tan tones), Greystone (whitewash gray), Pinehurst (clay red and whitewash), Sahara (tan and brown) Westfield (mottled brown, black and white), Edinburgh (clay red and mottled black and whitewash), and Ledgestone (currently used at all other Denison Parks and entrances to the City). Mr. Egger pointed out that Ledgestone is a locally sourced stone and shipping is inexpensive.

Ms. Gott asked to see the Pinehurst sample again. Ms. McKinney asked if the cap stone in the photo would be similar to the capstone chosen by the Board in November and Mr. Egger indicated that it would resemble the photo. Ms. Gary stated that she liked the Ledgestone because it reminded her of Texas and Oklahoma. Ms. McKinney pointed out that historically the gates have been in a red brick, so she leans toward the red brick examples, as did Ms. Gott.

Microphones failed to pick up the discussion among the board members or Ms. Gott's question or comments to Mr. Egger. Ms. McKinney asked Mr. Greenleaf for his opinion, but the microphone didn't pick up his comments. The Board did say "Pinehurst" in unison at one point, but otherwise, the conversation was indecipherable.

Justin Eastwood asked Mr. Egger if the turn-around, cost and availability of the Ledgestone is comparable to the other examples, and Mr. Egger reiterated that the selections were based on all of the above and are comparable to one another. He pointed out that the Ledgestone is immediate, but the other examples have very short turn-around (about 2-4 weeks). Ms. McKinney asked if the columns are solid brick or veneers, and Ms. Gott made comments (indecipherable). Mr. Egger indicated that these are full bricks and not a veneer. The columns will have steel reinforcements.

Ms. Gott commented that the historic downtown doesn't use stone because it doesn't look to the historic and it doesn't lend itself to the time in which the cemetery was built. She commented that the color and style should honor the cemetery.

Mr. Eastwood asked if Pinehurst was the most appropriate for the cemetery and Ms. Gott said that it was the one that caught her attention the most because the others were too red or too gray. Ms. McKinney and Ms. Gott both agreed that gray has been somewhat over-used in construction over the last few decades. Mr. Eastwood stated there is no wrong decision, but they should decide if they want to maintain a historic look or a modern one.

Ms. McKinney asked if there was any further discussion and if not, she asked for the motion to vote on the color and style.

On motion by Board Member Janet Gott, seconded by Board Member Obie Greenleaf, the Cemetery Advisory Board unanimously approved the **Pinehurst** brick example.

4. STAFF UPDATES

A. Receive a report and hold a discussion regarding 2023-2024 projects and events.

Chip Egger provided more information on the Fence project timeline. He mentioned that the color choice was one of the most recent tasks to complete on the timeline. He will present the decision to Huitt-Zollars and he anticipates that they will finalize the documents for review and should reply to him in 4-6 weeks. Once the documents are approved, an RFP will be issued to solicit contractors for the work. Mr. Egger anticipates the Spring of 2024 to finalize the contractor choice. Once the contractors are selected, it's difficult to speculate the timeline to start the building phase, but after conversations with Huitt-Zollars, he feels that Spring-Summer 2024 is still a reasonable estimate for the beginning of the construction.

Phase I of the project is to complete the fencing and gates for Magnolia. If cost allows, they may be able to simultaneously work on Magnolia and Fairview, but Magnolia will take precedence if the combined construction wasn't cost efficient. Phase II will be to begin the gates and entrances at Fairview.

Mr. Eastwood asked how working on Magnolia and Fairview at the same time might look. Mr. Egger pointed out that the goal is to avoid the construction looking like a "phased" project. Magnolia can be completed, and Fairview can get to a point where they "look" complete enough with the signage, gates and columns – but will wait for the additional funding to complete the fence across the highway frontage. The scheduling will be in line with the funding.

Ms. McKinney asked what deadline date for funding the project might need complete the project "all at once". If the funds could be reached all at once, Mr. Egger said that the date the funds would be needed would be in Summer 2024. If the money were raised prior to Fall, it could continue as one continuous project. Ms. McKinney felt that July 2024 would be a good deadline raising the funds. Mr. Eastwood and Mr. Egger agreed. Ms. McKinney assured that the money would be raised.

Mr. Egger updated the Board on the CemSites software installation and training. He explained that CemSites had difficulty mapping the sites based on the cemetery measurement records. A few blocks are causing problems, so CemSites will allow the cemetery to pin the sites after installation and implementation of the software. Beta Training will start in the next few weeks and iPads will be issued to the utility staff for use in the field. He projected the launch of the software sometime in the next two months. Ms. McKinney asked if there is good wifi throughout the cemetery and Mr. Egger stated that the cemetery does not have wifi, but the public will use their phone service to find the graves.

Mr. Egger then updated the Board on the digitization project at the cemetery. To date, over 30,000 paper records have been digitized. Over 28,000 records were processed for retention, and a century of paper clutter has been processed. Over 5,000 Deeds have been verified against electronic data and digitized for easy searching and over 240 missing burial records have been identified and digitized. Mr. Eastwood asked Ms. Chance-Parrish about an additional 2,000 records reviewed since December 2023. Ms. Chance-Parrish explained that she and the part-time seasonal assistant are using a cross-reference verification strategy to check the Fairview electronic records against the records in Ancestry.com (Death Certificates), Findagrave and TxGenWeb project. She stated that this project had only verified through the "D's" alphabetically and found over 2,000 records to update and 240 missing burial records. These will all be updated and added to the new software platform.

Mr. Eastwood also pointed out that this project had uncovered the fact that the earliest burial to take place was in 1872 rather than 1882, as previously noted in historic documents. At least 25 burials took place between 1872 and 1882.

Mr. Egger moved on to give an update about the 6th Annual Wreaths Across America event held at Fairview on December 16, 2023. He stated that over 1,500 wreaths were distributed this year by approximately 35 volunteers. About 65 people were in attendance. Ms. Gott mentioned the Wreath Matching program that took place between December 16 and January 16. Ms. Chance-Parrish verified that the Matching Program takes place for one month following Wreaths Across America event. Ms. McKinney pointed out that she had a misunderstanding about the purchase or sponsorship of wreaths. Ms. McKinney had an awkward issue with the process during the December event and Mr. Eastwood mentioned that he could put the Board in contact with the hosts of the event so they may have a better understanding of the sponsorship program. Ms. Gott mentioned that the Matching Program should be on the City website. She mentioned that it was mentioned in the City Manager's newsletter with the pictures of the wreaths in the snow at Arlington. Mr. Eastwood mentioned that the media is typically at the event, but we would like to get ahead of it.


Mr. Egger mentioned that new procedures in place regarding burials in the cemeteries outside of Fairview (Coffman-Layne, Oakwood, Magnolia). In the past, a 3rd party burial contractor conducted the burials in those cemeteries. Because of various problems with that arrangement, in future, the Fairview staff will conduct the burials in outlying cemeteries rather than a 3rd party contractor. The cemetery would also like to secure agreements with multiple 3rd party burial services to use on an as-needed basis only – not an exclusive contract. The previous contractor did not deliver services to Fairview's standards and that is one of the main reasons for the changes in procedure. Mr. Egger mentioned that the Fairview staff now has newly procured equipment – mowers, mini-excavators and trailers – which gives them the ability to conduct the off-site burials.

Mr. Egger showed the Board pictures of the maintenance staff's recent projects including landscaping the office center parking garden with help from the City's Beautification team. The maintenance staff have received a new ¾ ton Ram truck, a new mini-excavator and a tractor to pull the dump trailer. He mentioned that the mini-excavator is a great improvement and leaves very little damage to the grounds. He also illustrated the utility staff's in-house projects in renovating equipment to look and perform like new. They have created a custom trailer from a small unused garden trailer, and they use it to pull the ground

packer. The packer is used on all burials creating a smoother appearance to new burials. This allows the monument companies to set the markers earlier by decreasing the settling of graves, and it has a much neater appearance for the families who visit. The previous fresh burials were unattractive. Mr. Egger then illustrated the clean up of the Maintenance Shop by Victor Ricano and his utility team. They have revamped the entire shop, created a break room, a new tool room, vertical storage options on all of the walls, and hauled off massive amounts of clutter. Mr. Egger showed slides of the progress in before and after pictures. Mr. Egger pointed out that this improves productivity and moral for the entire team.

Mr. Egger then updated the Board on the progress of the Pre-emergent Program. It started in the Fall of 2023 and another treatment was just completed in February 2024. He stated that this program will eliminate so many weeds that it will reduce the amount of mowing necessary in Fairview. The primary goal is to minimize the weeds, encourage the grass growth, and reduce the need for robust mowing. The next pre-emergent treatment should take place in the Fall of 2024. Ms. McKinney and Ms. Gott both congratulated Mr. Egger on a job well done. Mr. Greenleaf mentioned that he was very impressed with the renovation of the iron bridge that the utility staff completed in 2023.

There being no further business to come before the Cemetery Advisory Board, the meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m.


KRIS MCKINNEY, Board Chair

ATTEST
