



# City of Racine

City Hall  
730 Washington Ave.  
Racine, WI 53403  
www.cityofracine.org

## Meeting Minutes - Final Board of Cemetery Commissioners

*Sharon Baldukas  
Sandy Weidner  
Arthur Petersen  
Kristine Reisdorf  
Jerry Ruud*

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Monday, June 27, 2011

4:30 PM

City Hall Annex, Rm. 130

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### 1. Call To Order

*The meeting was called to order at 4:33 PM.*

### 2. Roll Call

*Staff Present: Donnie Snow, Steve Bedard, Sherri Ruud*

*Guest: Dan Elsass*

**PRESENT:** 5 - Sharon Baldukas, Sandy Weidner, Arthur Petersen, Kristine Reisdorf and Jerry Ruud

### 3. Approval of Minutes for the May 16, 2011 Meeting

*The Minutes were distributed.*

**A motion was made by Jerry Ruud, seconded by Sandy Weidner, to Approve the Minutes. The motion PASSED by a Voice Vote.**

### 4. Public Comment

*No public comment*

### 5. Reports

#### A. Cemetery Supervisor Report

##### i. Burial and Revenue Report

*Steve Bedard indicated a comparison of year to date burials shows 1 more burial in 2011 versus 2010. There were two Saturday burials in May, bringing the year to date total for Saturday burials to 5.*

**A motion was made by Sandy Weidner, seconded by Kristine Reisdorf, to receive and file the report. The motion PASSED by a Voice Vote.**

##### ii. Data Entry (CIMS)

Steve Bedard advised the inputting of burial cards in Mound Cemetery is in the "Kn" section.

There are some problems with the burial cards in Mound Cemetery: The spelling of either the first or last name does not match the lot card, or the grave is not listed. The data is not loaded into CIMS until resolved. The only way to resolve is to physically go into the cemetery and look at the gravesite. Steve advised that most of the discrepancies have been resolved thus far.

**A motion was made by Sandy Weidner, seconded by Kristine Reisdorf, to receive and file the report. The motion PASSED by a Voice Vote.**

## 6. Update on Cemetery Projects

[11-6438](#)

**Subject:** [Direct Referral] Review and Discussion of Cemetery Audit by Public Administration Associates, LLC

**Recommendation of the Board of Cemetery Commissioners on June 27, 2011:** That this matter be deferred.

**Fiscal Note:** N/A

*Dan Elsass from Public Administration Associates, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, appeared and distributed the Racine Cemeteries 2011 Operational Audit preliminary draft, and shared a summary of the most important recommendations.*

### CEMETERY BUDGET AND FUND BALANCES

*In 2010, the Cemeteries underspent to budget by \$34,000.*

*Over the past six years, the General Maintenance Fund has declined to insufficient levels due to the use of the fund balance to protect against higher subsidies of cemetery expenses required from the City tax levy. The pattern of applying \$100,000 to \$200,000 per year cannot continue past fiscal year 2012 without depleting the General Maintenance Fund completely.*

*There are two reasons for the reduction in revenue:*

- 1. Aggressive competition from private cemeteries;*
- 2. The recession -- there was \$32,000 less interest earnings due to City Investments earning only 1.1%.*

*Rather than paying cash up front for cemetery projects, Mr. Elsass recommends the use of Municipal Bonds, as other communities do not pay cash up front for their cemetery projects.*

### MARKETING AND SALES

*Private cemeteries are aggressively marketing with seniors. Mr. Elsass recommends the Racine Cemeteries draw up a marketing plan, host funeral planning seminars, advertise, and tout the availability of grave sites, crypt and niches on local radio talk shows and through other free media.*

*Pricing at the Racine cemeteries is 10 percent to 40 percent lower than the*

competition.

*To increase revenue, Mr. Elsass recommends increasing the volume rather than increasing prices first by marketing the lower prices offered by the Racine Cemeteries.*

#### PERSONNEL

*In 2010, there were some staffing issues due to the loss of a .6 office assistant, and the hiring of a replacement assistant. This left the Cemetery Supervisor performing multiple tasks, not allowing him to focus on more important issues.*

*There is also a part time temporary person entering data into CIMS.*

*Top priority for the office support staff must be the entry of data into CIMS. Graceland is 100% complete; Mound is 40% complete. It is anticipated all data will be entered by January/February, 2013.*

#### PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONTRACTS

*Mr. Elsass advised that any time a contract can be written up with no escalation clause as the contract was written with the Bruce Company, it is a benefit for the City. Racine's Cemeteries are cutting edge for cemetery grounds maintenance, as most of the cities he interviewed are using their own cemetery crews, or forestry crews rather than outsourcing. These other cities were very interested in how Racine accomplished this.*

*The City contracts with Drop Rite Tree Service for periodic tree trimming of large branches and all needed tree removal.*

#### ALLEY BURIALS AND 50 YEAR VACATION POLICIES

*Mr. Elsass advised that upon review of the alley burial situation, it is not as significant as outlined previously in Attorney Letteney's earlier memo. At present, there are a total of 80 lots that are either fully within a platted alley or easement surrounding other graves, or partially encroach on alleys or pathways. There are a total of 336 occupied alley graves in the Cemeteries.*

*Glen Porter, the current chair of the State Cemetery Board, says that in his 27 years running a New Berlin cemetery, he has no knowledge of an alley burial in Wisconsin ever being contested. Most of the old allocations of alleys between sections were based on the need for horse drawn carriages to transport caskets or visitors to grave sites.*

*Mr. Elsass recommends that when an owner of one of the 80 lots requests a burial, they are offered an equivalent available grave site in close proximity to other family members. If a suitable site does not exist, the Cemetery Supervisor should then have authorization to offer to repurchase the grave site from the current owner for a negotiated price up to 125% of the current price of the alley plot, and assist the requester in finding a new spot. If an alley burial occurs, the Cemetery Supervisor should make a good faith effort to contact the owners whose lots abut the alley grave at the abutting owners' last known address, or an extra precaution would be to place an announcement in the newspaper announcing the burial and location, within 5 days*

*of granting the alley burial.*

*Another option would be to have both cemeteries resurveyed and replatted to remove most interior alleys. This could take some time and would cost an estimated \$300 to \$400 per acre; there are 50 acres at each cemetery.*

*Regarding vacation of unused graves older than 50 years from date of purchase, under Wisconsin state law, the cemetery administration may begin the process to reclaim the deed for plots that have been purchased prior to 1961 with no activity or communication with cemetery personnel for 50 consecutive years. Vacated plots, purchased at much lower prices fifty or more years ago, will yield much higher revenues when resold at current lot prices.*

*Kristine Reisdorf was excused at 6:35 p.m.*

*It was requested that the Commission review Mr. Elsass' preliminary draft audit and email all questions to Donnie Snow and Sherri Ruud within the next two weeks in order to allow Mr. Elsass time to review and incorporate the necessary changes in the document.*

**A motion was made by Sandy Weidner, seconded by Arthur Petersen, to defer to the next meeting. The motion PASSED by a Voice Vote.**

[10-5650](#)

**Subject:** Review Wis. Stats. §157.07

**Recommendation of Board of Cemetery Commissioners on October 18, 2010:** That this matter be deferred.

**Fiscal Note:** N/A

**Recommendation of Board of Cemetery Commissioners on November 15, 2010:** That this matter be deferred.

**Fiscal Note:** N/A

**Recommendation of Board of Cemetery Commissioners on January 17, 2011:** That this matter be deferred.

**Fiscal Note:** N/A

**Recommendation of the Board of Cemetery Commissioners on February 21, 2011:** That this matter be deferred.

**Fiscal Note:** N/A

**Recommendation of the Board of Cemetery Commissioners on March 21, 2011:** That this matter be deferred.

**Fiscal Note:** N/A

**Recommendation of the Board of Cemetery Commissioners on**

**April 18, 2011:** That this matter be deferred.

**Fiscal Note:** N/A

**Recommendation of the Board of Cemetery Commissioners on May 16, 2011:** That this matter be deferred.

**Fiscal Note:** N/A

**Recommendation of the Board of Cemetery Commissioners on June 27, 2011:** That this matter be deferred.

**Fiscal Note:** N/A

A motion was made by Sandy Weidner, seconded by Sharon Baldukas, to defer to the next meeting. The motion PASSED by a Voice Vote.

[10-5651](#)

**Subject:** Discuss Fee Increases

**Recommendation of the Board of Cemetery Commissioners on October 18, 2010:** That this matter be Deferred.

**Fiscal Note:** N/A

**Recommendation of the Board of Cemetery Commissioners on November 15, 2010:** That this matter be Deferred.

**Fiscal Note:** N/A

**Recommendation of the Board of Cemetery Commissioners on January 17, 2011:** That this matter be Deferred.

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A motion was made by Sandy Weidner, seconded by Sharon Baldukas, to defer to the next meeting. The motion PASSED by a Voice Vote.

### **Adjournment**

*The Commission thanks Mr. Elsass for his effort and his thoroughness in preparing the Cemetery Audit.*

*There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:42 PM.*

**If you are disabled and have accessibility needs or need information interpreted for you, please call the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department at 262-636-9453 at least 48 hours prior to this meeting.**