

City Council Workshop

Monday, May 16, 2022 6:30pm

Oakland Cemetery

Mayor Nyenhuis called the workshop to order at 6:30pm. The purpose of this workshop was to visit potential areas for expansion within the current cemetery, and to discuss future burial options.

Nyenhuis reviewed a few statistics after talking to a few cemeteries around the Stillwater and Bayport area. The current trend is 90% of all burials are now cremations and in one cemetery where a columbarium was installed, those burials have over taken the in ground burials.

There is a question of the area towards the south west portion of Subdivision A, titled Potters field. The City cemetery map has Block 24 blocked off for bodies which were transferred from the old Nason Hill cemetery in the 1800's, however Block 25 is showing V's by each grave. Mark McGinley is currently writing an extensive article on the cemetery and has found no record of any burials within block 25. He believes that there is the potential for 40-50 burials that could be placed there, which would get the City by for approximately 5 years.

Clerk Peterson noted that there is no section created in the cemetery card file for block 25, and it was told to her by the previous City Clerk that no graves were to be sold, nor have ever been sold in that block as it was part of Potter's field. Nyenhuis does not believe there are bodies there, however would like to look into what it would cost to have that area scanned in order to know for sure.

Pardun believes there are reasons for why that block was never sold, and would see the money it would take to scan that area put into a long term solution rather than a short term solution. Nyenhuis believes that if there may in fact be burials in that location, then the current dirt pile that has been accumulating from burials should be relocated. There has also been discussion of having markers placed on Potters field and the public lot on the north end to commemorate those burials and give the history of the transfer of bodies.

The Council then looked at the far west section, which was purchased later, as a potential area for expansion. The consensus was that this seemed like a natural area for expansion, which could include new grave sites, columbarium, ash garden etc..

Nyenhuis has contacted a group of landscape architects who engage in a design contest each year and would be willing to use the cemetery as a location. This would be at no cost to the City and would only require a host for the architects during this time period. There would also be no obligation for the City to select one of the designs, but would be a great way to get new ideas for the potential site.

Nyenhuis stated he does not like the location next to the maintenance building as a future expansion site. Many years ago, there was a homeowner who at that time owned the house on the corner of Broadway and County Rd 4, along with property going west to the railroad tracks. This homeowner subdivided this property to keep the home and five acres, and donated the remaining property to the DNR. At the time of that subdivision, the City approached this resident to inquire about purchasing a 5 acre section for the purpose of a future cemetery expansion however the resident had no interest in working with the City. Nyenhuis believes that property would be an ideal location for the expansion, and has since contacted the DNR and local legislators to see what it would take for the City to acquire a portion of that land.

Discussion was also held on whether to install working security cameras. Pardun believes that putting up a few trail cameras would be a good and low cost solution at this time. Nyenhuis will also look into what security cameras would cost.

Nyenhuis moved and Ward seconded to adjourn at 7:32pm. All in favor, motion passed.