



MINUTES

OF THE **REGULAR BOARD MEETING** OF THE **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

OF THE **MADERA CEMETERY DISTRICT**

TUESDAY, JANUARY 13, 2026, 2:30 p.m.

1301 ROBERTS AVE., MADERA, CA 93637

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE MADERA CEMETERY DISTRICT, HELD TUESDAY, JANUARY 13, 2026, AT 2:30 P.M. AT THE DISTRICT OFFICE BUILDING IN ARBOR VITAE CEMETERY, LOCATED AT 1301 ROBERTS AVE., MADERA, CA 93637

TRUSTEES PRESENT:

LOIS BETTY
BELVA BARE
DAVID NEMETH
CANDY TALLEY
MICHAEL FRANKLIN

PUBLIC/EMPLOYEES PRESENT:

ARTHUR GARDNER - DISTRICT MANAGER
RONNIE RAMIEREZ - OPERATIONS MANAGER
TRACY ISAAK - OFFICE TECHNICIAN
STEPHEN CLOETERS - H.R. GENERALIST
LORENZO BELMONTES - GROUNDS III
ANTHONY STERNBURG - GROUNDS I
MIKE MATHEWS - GROUNDS I
DENNIS MEISNER
BRAD DITTON

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairperson Lois Betty called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL OF BOARD:

Chairperson Lois Betty took roll of the Board. All trustees were present.

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG:

Trustee Belva Bare led the room in the Pledge of Allegiance.

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA:

None

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ANY AGENDA ITEM:

None

CONSENT CALENDAR:

Following the correction of a typo in the minutes and questions about safety expenditures, and what constitutes *small* tools, Trustee Candy Talley made a motion to approve the consent calendar, Trustee David Nemeth seconded, and all voted in favor.

CORRESPONDENCE:

None

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

No announcements

REPORT/DISCUSSION/DECISION ON 2026 LEASE AGREEMENT WITH D&D AG SERVICES, LLC:

Dennis Meisner, of D&D Ag Services, summarized the state of the grape and wine industry for the Board. Alcohol consumption in general is down significantly, which negatively impacts the growers and bottlers. Board Chair Lois Betty asked how the District could help. Mr. Meisner asked for a decrease in the price of the lease for 2026 to \$8,000. Trustee David Nemeth motioned for the 2026 lease agreement with D&D Ag Services to be set at \$8,000, Trustee Candy Talley seconded, and all voted in favor. The contract was then signed.

REPORT/DISCUSSION/DECISION ON OAKHURST WESTLAKE PROPERTY:

Brad Ditton from Century 21 introduced himself. Mr. Ditton had worked with MCD previously with the purchase of the Westlake property in Oakhurst, which was intended to be developed into a new cemetery.

He reviewed with the Board his plans to tie into utilities for his property that is adjacent to the District's Westlake property. He has been in talks with the community college that has been built nearby. If MCD is interested in selling Westlake, Mr. Ditton is offering to help.

RECESS TO CLOSED SESSION:

Chairperson Lois Betty asked for a closed session.

RECONVENE TO OPEN SESSION - REPORT OF ANY ACTION TAKEN:

Chairperson Lois Betty said no action was taken in closed session.

DISCUSSION/REPORT IF NEEDED ON OPERATIONS OF MCD CEMETERIES:

Operations Manager Ronnie Ramirez said things are running well. He said the new traffic spikes at Calvary are working effectively.

REPORT/DISCUSSION OF ACTION ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING:

District Manager Arthur Gardner would like to defer some items until the next board meeting due to time constraints in this meeting. The Arbor Vitae solar system is still not operational because of improperly filed documents on the part of the installer.

REPORT/DISCUSSION/DECISION ON CANCELATION OF CONTRACTS IN DEFAULT:

The Board reviewed a handout showing the list of unpaid preneed contracts that are more than 999 days old. The total open balance of these contracts is over \$469,000.

District Manager Arthur Gardner presented proposed language to change District policy on the process for cancelling delinquent contracts. The proposed language simplifies and shortens the cancellation process to make it easier to manage.

A list of contracts that are five months in arrears will be presented to the Board in a board meeting and will be cancelled in 30 days if no payment is received by the date stated in a collections letter sent to the customer.

The Board approved the general concept and language, which will be presented in a resolution for the Board to vote on in the February board meeting.

REPORT/DISCUSSION/DECISION ON BEAUTIFICATION OF RAYMOND CEMETERY:

Trustee Michael Franklin presented a summary of the Raymond beautification project and the estimated cost to carry it out. He thanked Trustee David Nemeth and District Manager Arthur Gardner for their participation in attending the meetings held with the Raymond community.

Franklin said that CSU Fresno will not be able to assist with the ground penetrating radar portion of the project for the time being. He suggested the idea of installing a four-rail fence rather than three-rail around the grounds and made his recommendations for the types of drought-resistant trees to plant. A Raymond resident has volunteered to water the trees until they are established and can grow on their own.

Board Chair Lois Betty stated that the project should be carried out and paid for over two fiscal years. The cost of the project is significant, but it meets the wants and needs of the taxpaying Raymond community. Further, she said that both Raymond and North Fork do not generate much revenue, but the District has a responsibility to provide services to all its constituents. Ms. Betty asked for a motion.

Trustee Candy Talley motioned to go forward with the project based on a \$140,000 budget to be spread out over two fiscal years. Trustee David Nemeth seconded the motion, stating that the cost is a little surprising but that Raymond is part of the District's jurisdiction and needs to be taken care of. The vote to approve was unanimous.

District Manager Arthur Gardner pointed out that the timeline to execute the project will need to be flexible because of manpower constraints. He suggested to Mr. Franklin that he talk with Operations Manager Ronnie Ramirez and Foreman Robert Ellis to coordinate the project moving from planning stage to execution.

REPORT/DISCUSSION ON THE INSTALLATION OF VASES ON CALVARY'S GLASS NICHES:

In the November, 2025 board meeting, the Board approved a public request to install vases in the marble strip between the corner glass niches and the mausoleum crypts in the Calvary mausoleum, so long as the installation was feasible. After reviewing the situation, it had been determined that drilling in the marble was too risky because of the risk of cracking the stone. Chairperson Lois Betty said that it's an absolute *no* then. Trustee Belva Bare asked whether a table could be set there for the placing of flowers. Operations Manager Ronnie Ramirez said that tables had created problems in the past.

REPORT/DISCUSSION ON STATUS OF PRENEED FUNDS AND LIABILITIES; OFFERING PRENEED CONTRACTS:

Human Resources Generalist Stephen Cloeters has completed a review of the District's preneed contracts. The audit shows that, if every contract had to be fulfilled all at once, the District has enough funds to cover the cost of all the burials.

The total of preneed funds held with both Madera County and with Stifel is almost \$8 million. A sizeable portion of these funds is not considered a liability because it is either interest earned in an investment account or is money that was not transferred out of the preneed fund at the time a contract was fulfilled. District Manager Arthur Gardner asked the Board what they would like to do with the non-liability funds. He suggested the money be left in the preneed fund until the Board takes action to transfer it out for specific purposes.

Chairperson Lois Betty questioned whether it would be better to not offer preneed contracts. They create a lot of work. The Board discussed the ideas of not offering preneed contracts, reducing the terms of the contract to just six months, and requiring payment in full at the time of signing and accepting credit card payments.

Trustee Belva Bare suggested this item be included in the next meeting.

REPORT/DISCUSSION/DECISION ON MADERA COUNTY INQUIRY REGARDING NEW HOPE CEMETERY:

Madera County has reopened the discussion on the possibility of MCD having some kind of role in the maintenance of New Hope Cemetery. Atty Bob Hunt weighed in by email on the question and advised caution because of possible mission creep and liability concerns. He said LAFCo has the power to adjust the district's boundaries, but it does not have the power to force the District to accept ownership.

Trustee Candy Talley suggested the County hire a landscaping company. Trustee Michael Franklin commented on potential liability risks. District Manager Arthur Gardner showed the Board pictures of the cemetery and estimated that the District's annual cost for weed mitigation efforts would be around \$12,030, which doesn't include the cost of gasoline.

REPORT/DISCUSSION/ ON SCULPTURE ATOP ARBOR VITAE'S VETERANS MEMORIAL:

The vendor MCD uses for its bronze plaques, Southern California Bronze, has been contacted to see if they have a suitable existing mold of an eagle. Using an existing mold would be significantly cheaper than commissioning an original sculpture. This will be on February's agenda.

REPORT/DISCUSSION/DECISION ON COMPUTERS/LAPTOPS AND INTERNET SERVICE FOR CALVARY, OAKHILL, AND NORTH FORK CEMETERIES:

The iPads that were purchased for each cemetery to use for Plotbox have turned out to not be conducive for using the online version of the software. District Manager Arthur Gardner would like to get internet service at every cemetery and purchase a computer for each location.

Trustee David Nemeth moved to approve the purchase of two laptops and one desktop with a spending limit of \$2,500, Trustee Michael Franklin seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

REPORT/DISCUSSION/DECISION ON RESOLUTION 169-2026: POLICY ON MANAGEMENT OF PRENEED FUNDS:

Resolution 169-2026 establishes that preneed funds, at the time of fulfillment, will be transferred out of the preneed fund at the amount as was paid in at the time of purchase. Trustee Candy Talley moved to approve the resolution as written, Trustee Michael Franklin seconded. The Board was polled: Chairperson Lois Betty, aye; Vice Chair Belva Bare, aye; Trustee David Nemeth, aye; Trustee Candy Talley, aye; and Trustee Michael Franklin, aye.

REPORT/DISCUSSION/DECISION ON RESOLUTION 170-2026: POLICY ON TRANSFERRING INTERMENT RIGHTS AND CANCELING CONTRACTS:

District Manager Arthur Gardner said this item was not ready for discussion. It will be included in the next agenda.

REPORT/DISCUSSION ON CAPC ANNUAL CONFERENCE, MARCH 19-21 IN ANAHEIM:

All trustees plan on attending, except Trustee Candy Talley.

REPORT/DISCUSSION ON CEMETERY SECURITY:

Gatekeeper Ruben Guerra's bodycam is working well. People are a lot more polite now when he talks to them.

**REPORT/DISCUSSION/DECISIONS ON INVESTEMENTS FOR
ENDWOMENT CARE & PRE-NEED FUNDS:**

Nothing to report.

**REPORT/DISCUSSION ON AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MONTH'S BOARD
MEETING:**

Trustee Manual

ADJOURNMENT: 6:35 p.m.

CHAIRPERSON

TRUSTEE

TRUSTEE

TRUSTEE

TRUSTEE