MINUTES

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

OF THE **MADERA CEMETERY DISTRICT**

TUESDAY, JULY 28, 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, JULY 28, 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:	***PUBLIC/EMPLOYEES PRESENT:***
LOIS BETTY	ARTHUR GARDNER - DISTRICT MANAGER
BELVA BARE	RONNIE RAMIREZ – OPERATIONS MANAGER
DAVID NEMETH	TRACY ISAAK – OFFICE TECHNICIAN
CANDY TALLEY	
MICHAEL FRANKLIN	

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. Trustees Betty, Bare, Nemeth, Talley and Franklin were present.

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG:

Trustee Michael Franklin led the room in the Pledge of Allegiance.

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA:

None

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ANY AGENDA ITEM:

None

CONSENT CALENDAR:

Trustee Candy Talley asked that her name be corrected from Candy Nemeth to Candy Talley on page 3. Trustee Michael Franklin asked the minutes on page 3 be edited to convey that District administrators will take more of a leadership role in the Memorial Day services. Board Vice Chair Belva Bare asked that clarification be

provided for the Trustees on how to understand the Trial Balance. The district manager will attempt to help out.

Trustee Talley moved to approve the consent calendar from June 2026. Trustee David Nemeth seconded and all voted in favor.

CORRESPONDENCE:

None

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

None

RECESS TO CLOSED SESSION:

Chairperson Lois Betty called for a closed session.

RECONVENE TO OPEN SESSION - REPORT OF ANY ACTION TAKEN:

Chairperson Lois Betty said no action was taken.

DISCUSSION/REPORT IF NEEDED ON OPERATIONS OF MCD CEMETERIES:

District Manager Arthur Gardner reported that he took a phone call from the owner of the solar company that installed Arbor Vitae's solar system. He has not been paid yet and wondered what he could do to help. He and Gardner exchanged insights on the project.

Operations Manager Ronnie Ramirez showed pictures from before and after the construction of the fence at Raymond Cemetery. Decomposed granite will probably be laid in October and the tree stump of the oak tree will be removed.

Trustee Michael Franklin would like to put trees outside the fence on District property. He suggested the sign in front of the cemetery be moved to the street so people can more easily find it.

Mr. Franklin discussed the plan for using ground penetrating radar. He had emailed the district manager about it. The company who rents it charges $1k per week and will give a free demonstration in Raymond. Vice chair Belva Bare said the GPR could also be used in the County area at Arbor Vitae to discover where burials are.

REPORT/DISCUSSION OF ACTION ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS BOARD MEETINGS:

District Manager Arthur Gardner said he'd ordered the bronze eagle for Arbor Vitae's veterans memorial. He will meet the vendor in Bakersfield to pick it up and save on shipping costs.

The Board discussed the metal sculptures to go on the west end of the Arbor Vitae mausoleums C & D. It was agreed that a representation of the Tree of Life would be a good sculpture for Arbor Vitae.

Portions of the ceiling and walls at the old District office have been demolished so Larry Moore from Berry Construction can see whether walls are load bearing. If

possible, some walls would be removed to make a larger space on the east side of the structure. Board Chair Lois Betty suggested the passage from the east side to the west be made into an arch so that it looks like it was built intentionally.

Arthur Gardner, Operations Manager Ronnie Ramirez, and Foreman Robert Ellis recently had a video conference call with the landscape design firm Lee's & Associates to discuss the Oakhill urn garden project. The next step is to contract with a surveyor for a topographic survey.

Mr. Gardner has been in contact with Madera High School about the 2027 Memorial Day program. The high school's response has been enthusiastic, but there is some concern about the timing of the event coinciding with the last week of school.

A brief discussion was had about potential items to place in a time capsule.

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

District Manager Arthur Gardner presented an updated list of the persons whose names still remained on the collections list since the previous board meeting. Some names were highlighted because of the percentage of their contracts they'd paid. Gardner said he did not want to cancel contracts of people who'd paid most of their contract. Chairperson Lois Betty and Vice Chair Belva Bare suggested posting a list of names on the District's Facebook page, without being explicit on the fact they're in default, to see if it helps get in touch with them. Gardner was instructed to post the list on Facebook.

REPORT/DISCUSSION/DECISION ON REVISION OF RESOLUTION 2026-175 REGARDING EV PURCHASE:

District Manager Arthur Gardner said he'd looked into EV options after getting a phone call from the government purchasing group Omnia. It is his opinion that the Chevy Blazer EV would be a better vehicle to use for District use because of its size, cargo capacity, and its price, which is now comparable to at base Tesla model. Resolution 2026-175.1 gives Board approval for purchasing either a Tesla or the Chevy Blazer EV. Trustee Candy Talley moved to approve the resolution, Trustee Michael Franklin seconded. A poll of the Board was unanimous: Chairperson Lois Betty, aye; Vice Chair Belva Bare, aye; Trustee David Nemeth, aye; Trustee Candy Talley, aye; and Trustee Micheal Franklin, aye.

REPORT/DISCUSSION/DECISION ON NICHES ON EAST END OF ARBOR VITAE MAUSOLEUMS C & D:

The Board had approved in the previous meeting the proposed design for the niches, to be purchased from Columbarium USA. They reviewed the final pricing for the project and the stone options. They discussed whether the niches should have vases or not. Board Chair Lois Betty asked that the vase question be placed on the

agenda for the August meeting. Trustee Candy Talley moved to accept the niche proposal, Trustee David Nemeth seconded, and all voted in favor.

REPORT/DISCUSSION/DECISION ON TRUSTEE COMPENSATION:

The Board reviewed a table showing how much their compensation would be if they received the maximum 5%-per-year increase over a ten-year time span. The consensus of the trustees was that a resolution to increase their compensation be prepared for the next board meeting. District Manager Arthur Gardner will post the required notice of a public hearing in the Madera Tribune.

REPORT/DISCUSSION/DECISION ON EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE FOR 2027:

CalPERS will discontinue offering United Health Care coverage starting January, 2027. The decision to drop it came as the result of a price increase that was much higher than PERS anticipated. District Manager Arthur Gardner suggested the Board replace UHC with Blue Shield Access+.

Trustee David Nemeth stated that increasing health insurance costs will continue to be an issue and suggested the idea of putting a cap on how much the district will pay. Trustee Michael Franklin suggested the District's annual increase in its contribution to health insurance be capped at 6%, so that if insurance rates increased by more than 6%, the District would pay for a 6% increase and employees would pay the rest of the premium.

Trustee David Nemeth moved to increase the maximum District contribution for employee healthcare to $1,030 for the 2027 calendar year. Trustee Candy Talley seconded the motion, but the discussion continued.

Mr. Franklin suggested paying the full amount of the Blue Shield Access+ premium for now and letting the employees know that they will have to start paying some of the premium. It was suggested that administration should look into what benefits other public agencies are paying for.

After lengthy discussion, Trustee David Nemeth withdrew his motion regarding the $1,030 contribution. Vice Chair Belva Bare moved to approve a contribution of $1,177.77 for the period of January 1 to June 30 of 2027. The District's health insurance contribution can then be taken into consideration when the Board discusses employee pay raises for the 2027-28 fiscal year. Trustee Michael Franklin seconded the motion and all voted in favor. A resolution will be presented to the Board for a vote in the August board meeting.

Board Chair Lois Betty added that, even if the District has to delay or do away with a project, it is important to take care of the employees. It is the employees who maintain the beauty of the grounds and the status of the District.

REPORT/DISCUSSION/DECISION ON PRENEED FUND MANAGEMENT POLICY:

Board Vice Chair Belva Bare shared that she'd just completed her required ethics training. She did some online research and found documentation supporting her position that the Board should not touch preneed funds for any use other than fulfilling preneed contracts. Only the service charges that have not been transferred out may be used at the District's discretion.

When a person dies and their preneed contract is fulfilled, the District currently transfers money out of the preneed fund at the same amount that was originally paid in. It was suggested that the money should be pulled out at today's prices. PlotBox only allows for the same amount to come out as was put in. However, it's possible to transfer more out of the Preneed Account to account for interest earned, if it's legal to do so.

District Manager Arthur Gardner will be attending a PCA conference and will address this question with Atty. Brian Hughes. Chairperson Lois Betty asked that this be placed on next month's agenda.

REPORT/DISCUSSION ON AMOUNT PAID FOR REPURCHASED PLOTS:

Since 1985, the District has paid a minimum of $200 for plot interment rights sold back to the District. It was agreed that there's no need to change this.

REPORT/DISCUSSION/DECISION ON INVESTMENT POLICY:

At long last, the Investment Policy presented was satisfactory. Trustee David Nemeth moved to approve Resolution 2026-176, Trustee Candy Talley seconded, and all voted in favor: Chairperson Lois Betty, aye; Vice Chair Belva Bare, aye; Trustee David Nemeth, aye; Trustee Candy Talley, aye; and Trustee Micheal Franklin, aye.

REPORT/DISCUSSION ON TRUSTEE RECRUITMENT:

Chairperson Lois Betty has a candidate who is very interested and would like her to come to a board meeting and possibly attend the CAPC conference.

REPORT/DISCUSSION ON CEMETERY SECURITY:

The new gatekeeper, Andrew, is working out well. He's friendly.

REPORT/DISCUSSION/DECISIONS ON INVESTMENTS FOR ENDOWMENT CARE & PRENEED FUNDS:

Trustee David Nemeth reviewed recent investments held with Stifel.
Preneed: $285k to Apollo Global Mgmt. Corp
Endowment Principal: $115k to US Treasury Notes
Endowment Interest: $75k to Federal Home Loan Bank
Funds in the Preneed interest account will be moved to an investment with a higher return.

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

Solar.

ADJOURNMENT: 5:29 p.m.

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CHAIRPERSON

_____	_____
TRUSTEE	TRUSTEE
_____	_____
TRUSTEE	TRUSTEE