



MINUTES

OF THE **PLANNING MEETING** OF THE **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

OF THE **MADERA CEMETERY DISTRICT**

TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 2025, 9:00 a.m.

1301 ROBERTS AVE., MADERA, CA 93637

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE MADERA CEMETERY DISTRICT, HELD TUESDAY, APRIL 25, 2025, AT 9:00 A.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 RAMIREZ – OPERATIONS MANAGER
TRACY ISAAK – OFFICE TECHNICIAN
STEPHEN CLOETERS – H.R. GENERALIST
OMAR VERDUGO – GROUNDSKEEPER I
ANTHONY STERNBURG – GROUNDSKEEPER I

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairperson Lois Betty called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

ROLL CALL OF BOARD:

Chairperson Lois Betty took roll of the Board. Trustees Lois Betty, Belva Bare, David Nemeth, Candy Talley, and Mike Franklin were present.

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG:

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

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA:

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ANY AGENDA ITEM:

No public comment.

RECESS TO CLOSED SESSION:

There was a discussion on the need for a closed session. Chairperson Lois Betty asked whether the Board needed to do an evaluation of District Manager Arthur Gardner. Trustee David Nemeth said the Board needed a copy of the manager's goals. This could be done at the end of the meeting, time allowing.

No closed session was held.

RECONVENE TO OPEN SESSION - REPORT OF ANY ACTION TAKEN:

The Board did not go into closed session.

DISCUSSION OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024-25:

District Manager Arthur Gardner reviewed the items accomplished in the current fiscal year to date. Trustee Mike Franklin reported that he'd been sworn in as a trustee.

REVIEW OF DISTRICT FINANCES:

District Manager Arthur Gardner reviewed with the Board YTD financial reports and his projections for revenue and expenditures for the next fiscal year. He projects a surplus for 2025-26.

Trustee Mike Franklin asked whether the District has targets for revenue and for funds available to earmark for future projects. Chairperson Lois Betty said we must ensure that earmarked funds are allocated to the proper account and that expenditures from earmarked funds are deducted from those accounts.

There was a discussion on the past two years' deficit spending. The investments put into the construction of the District Office and Mausoleums C and D at Arbor Vitae meant that expenditures exceeded revenue. However, the District had saved funds held with the County to cover the cost of the projects.

EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE(S) TO PRESENT SALARY REQUEST TO THE BOARD:

Employee representatives Anthony Sternburg and Omar Verdugo presented their case for a 6% increase in employee compensation. Mr. Sternburg handed out information and made the argument that the cost of the basic necessities to sustain a household have gone up significantly. He stated that the government's measurement of inflation does not include those basics and so it is not a reliable indicator of inflation's real impact on families. High inflation has a higher impact on young people starting out in life than it does on older people who are financially established.

The Board thanked Messrs. Sternburg and Verdugo.

REVIEW OF PLOT AVAILABILITY AND NEEDS FORECAST:

District Manager Arthur Gardner reviewed charts and numbers regarding burial counts and burial types. PlotBox provides powerful reporting tools that will give the District more information and will provide a better picture on burial trends which will aid the Board and management in making decisions on projects and land use.

Mr. Gardner said there seems to be no immediate need for the creation of new burial spaces, but that in the near future Arbor Vitae will need more cremation space (Tree of Life Columbarium, raised garden niches, and niches on the ends of mausoleums) and Oakhill will need cremation space as well (additional companion-heavy niches and above-ground cremation spaces in the expansion area).

In the future, burial reports will show counts that don't include County burials. Family plots should be promoted to encourage their use. They are high-density and help conserve land.

Chairperson Lois Betty suggested the creation of an estate area for family plots. The District already worked on this in the past and architectural concept drawings were made up.

There is a need for more companion niches all around. Trustee Belva Bare emphasized the need for more at Arbor Vitae.

Chairperson Lois Betty asked about seating areas in the proposed Tree of Life Columbarium and asked how many niches would fit into the building. Mr. Gardner said that in the fall, a crew will go in to remove wood paneling from the walls to see what the bones of the building look like.

Trustee Candy Talley said that Gardner should get out to promote the District and its burial features with community clubs and organizations.

REVIEW OF DISTRICT EQUIPMENT AND VEHICLES:

Operations Manager Ronnie Ramirez reviewed the District's inventory of equipment and vehicles. The Board of Trustees approved the purchase earlier in the year of a new pickup truck for Oakhill Cemetery. Mr. Ramirez reported that he'd decided to go a different route and rehabilitate the 1992 Toyota that had died. Only about \$6,000 was spent to rebuild the engine and fix the truck up.

Mr. Ramirez will be putting together an auction of old vehicles and equipment later this calendar year.

REVIEW/DISCUSSION/DECISION ON ROAD SEALING/REPAIR ROTATION SCHEDULE:

The Board reviewed the schedule to seal and repair roads. Arbor Vitae will be done in the fall of 2025. The quote for all the recommended major repairs and sealing at Arbor Vitae came in just under \$300k, which includes a complete redo of the shop area asphalt. Trustee Mike Franklin suggested putting in concrete in the shop because it can better handle the weight of the large trucks that pass through there.

Trustee Candy Talley made a motion to do part of Arbor Vitae in FY 2025-26 and to do the shop area in 2026-27, which is scheduled to be a bye year. District Manager Arthur Gardner suggested the Board also consider redoing the main entrance to Calvary in the bye year because all the trees will be removed from there. There was a discussion of whether new trees should be planted at Calvary to replace those being removed. Ms. Talley put forward the idea of the Board taking a look at Calvary to decide whether to replace the trees.

Trustee Candy Tally amended her previous motion and moved to approve the repair and reseal of the general roads at Arbor Vitae in 2025-26 and then taking care

of the Arbor Vitae shop area and the Calvary entrance road in 2026-27. Trustee Belva Bare seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

THE MEETING WAS PAUSED AT 12:10 p.m. FOR LUNCH AND CHAIRPERSON LOIS BETTY CALLED IT BACK TO ORDER AT 12:57 p.m.

REVIEW/SETUP OF IMMEDIATE, 2-YEAR, & 5-YEAR GOALS AND COMPLETION OF GOALS SET FOR PREVIOUS YEARS:

District Manager Arthur Gardner reviewed the progress on the goals set for 2024-25. Charges for water at Oakhill are going up by 10%. Mr. Gardner would like to make it so the public can make payments online through the District's website. He's spoken with three vendors about glass-front niches. Foreman Robert Ellis has done a nice job of cleaning up the North Fork Cemetery.

Mr. Gardner then reviewed the 1-year, 2-year, and 5-year goals. There was a discussion on moving the remodel of the Calvary office up into the 1-year goal list. Chairperson Lois Betty instructed Gardner to get estimates for the Calvary remodel and to make it a good remodel, not a cheap job.

H.R. Generalist Stephen Cloeters advised the Board that PlotBox will allow the District to stop maintaining physical maps. Contract and burial documents will be scanned into the program and physical copies will not need to be archived.

Trustee Mike Franklin recommended that the lone concrete bench in the mausoleum area at Arbor Vitae be replaced with a granite bench. The bench stands out from all the other granite benches.

REVIEW OF FISCAL YEAR 2025-26 BUDGET PROPOSAL:

District Manager Arthur Gardner reviewed the proposed budget and said he tried to be conservative in his revenue projections. He reviewed the required expenditures and also the capital expenditure options proposed for the upcoming year.

There was a discussion on PG&E and the need to contact them and the solar company to find out about the large true-up the District just paid.

There was some confusion about the bottom line for the budget and a short discussion on what capital expenditures could be cut. After some discussion, it became clear that the District would still have funds in excess of \$300k remaining after all proposed capital expenditures.

The finalized budget will be presented to the Board for review and approval in the May 27, 2025 Regular Meeting of the Board.

REPORT/DISCUSSION ON MASTER PLAN FOR ARBOR VITAE AND OAKHILL:

The Board reviewed the drawings and suggestions provided by the landscape architect firm Lees & Associates. There is no immediate need to act on any of the

recommendations but Chairperson Lois Betty advised to hang on to the drawings and keep them accessible.

REPORT/DISCUSSION ON NEW CEMETERY/ANNEXATION IN EASTERN

MADERA COUNTY:

Chairperson Lois Betty said there is a site between Ave. 15 and Highway 41 that would be a good location for a cremation-only cemetery. The Board looked at satellite images of the area to get their bearings. A cremation-only cemetery would still require a little water for the vegetation.

There was a question over whether MCD is allowed to open a cemetery in an area outside the District's boundaries. The area in question is outside the boundaries for now.

REVIEW/DISCUSSION/DECISION ON CALPERS UNFUNDED ACCRUED

LIABILITY PREPAYMENT:

Paying the full amount of the District's unfunded accrued liability with CALPERS at the beginning of the fiscal year saves the District money. Trustee Belva Bare moved to pay the full amount of the unfunded accrued liability, Trustee Candy Talley seconded, and all voted in favor.

REVIEW/DISCUSSION/DECISION ON HEALTH, VISION, & DENTAL

INSURANCE:

H.R. Generalist Stephen Cloeters went over projected changes to the cost of health benefits. Vision and dental will stay unchanged. Health insurance is projected to increase by approximately 6%.

REPORT/DISCUSSION/DECISION ON SALARY SCHEDULE CHANGES:

District Manager Arthur Gardner went over what the salary schedule would look like under several different pay increase scenarios. He also presented an idea for changing the pay raises for employees who reach seven and ten years of tenure with the District. Trustee David Nemeth pointed out that the changes made to the salary schedule several years ago changed the amount of raises for new hires and affected the new employees the most.

The request from the employee representatives was for 6%. The trustees discussed the matter and reached a consensus for a 5% increase. Trustee David Nemeth moved to increase employee pay by 5% for the upcoming fiscal year, Trustee Mike Franklin seconded, and all voted in favor.

ADJOURNMENT: 2:36 p.m.