MINUTES

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

OF THE **MADERA CEMETERY DISTRICT**

TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2026, 9:30 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 21, 2026, AT 9:30 A.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	STEPHEN CLOETERS – H.R. GENERALIST
MICHAEL FRANKLIN	IGNACIO BECERRA - SUPERINTENDENT
	ANTHONY STERNBURG – GROUNDSKEEPER I
	JESUS BRAVO – GROUNDSKEEPER II
	MIGUEL MARTINEZ – GROUNDSKEEPER I

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairperson Lois Betty called the meeting to order at 9:34 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 Candy Talley led the room in the Pledge of Allegiance.

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA:

The date of the meeting printed on the agenda mailed to the trustees was incorrect. The date on the agenda posted publicly had already been corrected.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ANY AGENDA ITEM:

No public comment.

RECESS TO CLOSED SESSION:

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.

Chairperson Lois Betty asked about the pending rebate for the recently-purchased electric utility vehicles. Net cost to the District should be $0.

All cemeteries now have full internet access and all are using Plotbox.

Updating the price book has been simplified. The price charged for any goods used in the burial process is now tied to the District's cost. The other burial charges are tied to the percentage of the pay raise the Board approves for employees.

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

Four employees represented the whole this year. Groundskeeper I Anthony Sternburg was the spokesman for the group. He distributed a handout and reviewed labor market trends, inflation rates, and the increase in prices in common goods that really impact households. The group requested a 6% raise for FY 2026-27.

The trustees thanked the group for their professional presentation and praised them for the good work they do. The employee representatives then left the meeting.

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 2026-27.

Chairperson Lois Betty asked about tracking expenditures for capital projects. The Board would like records to show that money for projects comes from funds reserved for those projects.

Trustee David Nemeth asked that the Trial Balance be corrected to show Stifel as the preneed fund rather than Wells Fargo.

REVIEW OF PLOT AVAILABILITY AND NEEDS FORECAST:

District Manager Arthur Gardner reviewed charts and numbers regarding burial counts and burial types. Arbor Vitae and Oakhill need new niche space.

When comparing MCD burial counts with Madera County death reports, MCD's burial counts have not kept pace with deaths. The percentage of Madera County deaths that resulted in a burial has shrunk from 54% in 2000 to 37% in 2024.

The Board discussed offering a variety of cremation options with different price levels. Niches at different price points, in-ground cremation gardens, an urn vault, a glass-niche columbarium, and an urn vault were all discussed.

Lee's and Associates was discussed as a partner for development.

THE MEETING WAS PAUSED AT 12:15 p.m. FOR LUNCH AND CHAIRPERSON LOIS BETTY CALLED IT BACK TO ORDER AT 1:00 p.m

REVIEW OF DISTRICT EQUIPMENT AND VEHICLES:

Operations Manager Ronnie Ramirez reviewed the District's inventory of equipment and vehicles. The turf vacs will be removed from inventory after they're auctioned off. Parts are not available.

District Manager Arthur Gardner suggested the District trade in the manager's SUV currently in use and purchase an EV. Money derived from the sale of the SUV, coupled with a $20k rebate from the Valley Air Board, would pay almost completely for a base model Tesla. The manager's SUV currently uses about 25% of all the gasoline used at Arbor Vitae. Trustee Michael Franklin pointed out the increased cost for insurance, electricity, and tires that would be incurred with an EV.

To be discussed in the next board meeting.

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

The Board reviewed the schedule to seal and repair roads. The parking lot at Raymond Cemetery will now need to be put on the schedule.

THE MEETING WAS PAUSED AT 12:15 p.m. FOR LUNCH AND CHAIRPERSON LOIS BETTY CALLED IT BACK TO ORDER AT 1:00 p.m.

REVIEW/SETUP OF IMMEDIATE, 2-YEAR, & 5-YEAR GOALS AND COMPLETION OF GOALS SET FOR PREVIOUS YEARS. DISCUSSION/ DECISION ON PRIORITIES AND SELECTION OF POTENTIAL PROJECTS:

District Manager Arthur Gardner reviewed the progress on the goals set for 2025-26 and the goals set for the next five-years.

Water for development at Oakhill is an issue. We should explore reclaimed water again.

The shop/office situation at North Fork was discussed.

The Board's consensus was to move forward with the development of an urn garden at Oakhill and with developing a road to the expansion area. Trustee David Nemeth suggested a trip to Oakhill to look at some other niche options.

Board Chair Lois Betty would like to get some pricing for the Tree of Life Columbarium in the old District Office building at Arbor Vitae. The Board wants to keep the flat roof for the building.

A new cemetery on the Hwy 41 corridor was discussed. Among ideas covered were a Prop 218 election, hiring a consultant, Jay Chapel purchasing adjacent land, and making it a cremation-only cemetery.

REVIEW OF FISCAL YEAR 2026-27 BUDGET PROPOSAL:

District Manager Arthur Gardner reviewed the proposed budget for 2026-27. Some corrections and additions were suggested. The eagle statue for the AV veterans memorial, funding for the Raymond project, the Calvary entry renovation, and replacing the asphalt at the AV shop yard.

The finalized budget will be presented to the Board for review and approval in the May 26, 2026 Regular Meeting of the Board.

REPORT/DISCUSSION ON NEW CEMETERY IN EASTERN MADERA COUNTY:

This item was already discussed in previous agenda items. No further discussion needed.

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 David Nemeth 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 decrease. Nothing is for sure until new rates are announced.

It was decided that the District will continue to pay 100% of the cost of United Health Care and that employees who choose a more expensive plan will pay the difference.

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.

The request from the employee representatives was for 6%. The Board discussed amounts ranging from 3% to 4%. Trustee Candy Talley moved to raise salaries by 4%, Trustee Michael Franklin seconded the motion. The motion passed by a 3/2 vote.

REPORT/DISCUSSION/DECISION ON CHANGES TO DISTRICT MANAGER'S COMPENSATION FOR 2026-27:

The district manager's compensation was not up for discussion this year because of an agreement reached in the previous Planning Meeting.

REPORT/DISCUSSION/DECISION ON PRICING CHANGES FOR 2026-27:

Trustee Candy Talley made a motion to increase the price on tangible items associated with burials based on the District's cost, and to raise the charge for all other goods and services commensurate with the pay raise given to District employees. Vice Chair Belva Bare seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

ADJOURNMENT: 3:40 p.m.

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CHAIRPERSON

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TRUSTEE	TRUSTEE
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