

MINUTES
CEMETERY BOARD SPECIAL MEETING
DOUGLASS ACTIVITY CENTER
February 19th, 2026 - 4:00 P.M.

The following members of the Cemetery Board were present: Mr. Dustin Duntz; Mr. Richard Akins; Mr. Pat Gormely; and Mr. Rex Fowles

Absent: Mr. Joe Gerken; Mr. Eric Londeen, Vice Chair; and Mr. Jerome Miratsky.

Employees Present: Mr. Mike Mohler, Cemetery Sexton; Mr. Casey Smithson, Park Superintendent; and Mr. Alfonso Leyva, Park Planner II.

A. MINUTES

Mr. Duntz called the meeting to order. It was moved by Mr. Akins, seconded by Mr. Gormely, to approve the minutes of the regular meeting held on October 16, 2025. On vote, motion carried 4-0.

B. PUBLIC COMMENT

Kathy Dzewaltowski with the Polly Odgen Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution discussed their plans for a wreath laying ceremony on May 3rd at 1pm. To note, there are three women at Sunset who are “real daughters,” and there are two “real granddaughters” (also original chapter members) of Revolutionary War soldiers. Wreath laying ceremony will take place at 1pm, May 3rd. There will be State Officers in town and could be a crowd for this event. The group wanted to reach out to discuss this event with the Cemetery Board. Will possibly have tents, tables and chairs in the Cemetery. These are for five different gravesites, within walking distance, at Sunset Cemetery.

C. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Due to a lapse of terms, an Election of Chairperson for the Cemetery Board was needed. It was moved by Mr. Fowles, seconded by Mr. Akins, to elect Mr. Duntz as Chairperson. On vote, motion carried 4-0.

D. SEXTON’S REPORT

Mr. Mohler shared that revenue for the current year were as follows: Sunrise Cemetery \$5,475.00 to include sales and burials; Sunset Cemetery \$350.00 to include sales and burials. Mr. Mohler provided an annual report for 2025 totaling \$124,050.00.

Discussion covered available cemetery lots and how the new software displays lot availability. Mr. Mohler cleared up that sellbacks to the City are at purchase price and not current rates. Also noted that burial rights may be granted; however, burial rights must be clearly communicated and properly documented to be valid. The group also discussed potential terms requiring empty/unused lots to be sold back after remaining vacant for a defined period of time, with the intent to revisit these items during upcoming lot price increase discussions. Kansas state law was referenced as generally involving an approximately three-year process related to unclaimed property. Operational history was noted that Sunrise began seeing increased activity around 1997 as Sunset reached capacity. Typical use patterns were also discussed: traditional burials are usually used first, followed by cremation placements, including lot configurations discussed as two traditional burials and one cremation. The Board intends to add these discussions to new business on future meetings.

E. OLD BUSINESS

Cemetery Improvements RFP: Mr. Leyva presented an update and discussion focused on refining the project scope and phasing. Shared slides presented at Commissioner’s Retreat. The previous Governing Body requested

to scale the scope down rather than pursuing everything listed in the Cemetery Master Plan. Priorities and phases were reviewed, including a concept to replicate the Sunset layout (joint maintenance facility(JMF) of 30x120) at Sunrise so both an office and shop could be located there. A one-level option at the southwest corner was discussed as a cost-saving measure, with an estimate of \$2,527,394. Mr. Fowles asked how many bays were being considered; Mr. Smithson indicated 3–5 bays. Staff noted they are still waiting on direction from the City Manager and need updated numbers to bring to the Commission; a scaled-down version at Sunrise was described as a possible approach.

Mr. Leyva noted a Commissioner expressed concern that \$2.5 million was still too high. Discussion included general support for Sunset and Zoo JMF, and that at least one Commissioner is in favor of adding columbariums; however, not all Commissioners were supportive, and several wanted to see a clearer Return on Investment (ROI). Mr. Mohler noted the City does not currently have City-owned columbariums and individuals have had to build their own. Mr. Smithson stated they have ran projections and believes columbariums can pay for themselves, contingent on sales. Mr. Leyva also shared a Commissioner comment that the proposal included “too much concrete,” referencing \$1.3 million for a 640-unit area, and discussed a “sell as you go” approach with phased construction of columbarium sections.

Staff reiterated they are awaiting direction from the City Manager/CMO and anticipate reengaging the architect to develop stronger plans and cost figures. The procurement approach was discussed as shifting from design-build to design-bid-build, with a goal of reaching approximately 70% plans to obtain more accurate pricing. No final project number is set; figures mentioned included \$5.6 million (reduced from roughly \$13 million for the full master plan scope). Mr. Smithson stated a funding source has not been finalized and noted upcoming budget/CIP discussions, including that three new Commissioners will be receiving a “crash course.” He also noted that even if funding is available, some items may not be covered.

Mr. Leyva requested the board provide priorities based on the list presented. Mr. Fowles asked whether the board had previously prioritized items; Mr. Leyva stated the last direction was generally to follow the master plan. Mr. Duntz asked whether funding had been available previously; Mr. Leyva referenced bonds and interest, and Mr. Smithson noted those funds may not be available and other funding options may be needed. Mr. Gormely asked how a columbarium of that size at Sunset might impact individual sales. Mr. Smithson emphasized pricing will influence where people choose to be interred, and Mr. Gormely noted that a columbarium is “a space in a wall.” Mr. Smithson stated Sunset is more of a premium location and may be more marketable, and the goal would be to use ROI to help fund future phases. Mr. Mohler stated the same concept could apply at Sunrise, but there are currently no plans to build there yet. Mr. Mohler also noted natural burials are performing better than expected. Fee policy was also referenced, including a written policy from 2014 and discussion of potential fee changes.

Additional discussion covered Sunset site needs (including roads and water). Mr. Smithson noted there may be other avenues to address road conditions if the larger project is not approved. Mr. Fowles commented that if cemetery roads are improved more than city streets, residents may be dissatisfied. Mr. Smithson noted the street tax does not include cemetery/parks, but the City still must maintain cemetery public infrastructure; staff indicated there have been multiple discussions on this issue. Mr. Duntz reiterated that a columbarium can pay for itself.

Fee discussions included whether fees would be increased; staff noted recommendations would be brought forward, and Mr. Mohler stated the board would be asked to weigh in before items go to the Commission. Mr. Akins asked whether the City would generate more than it uses; Mr. Smithson said no. Mr. Mohler noted that currently only Sunrise has a perpetual care fund that can be used to improve that cemetery, and Mr. Smithson stated the City could consider establishing one for Sunset. Mr. Mohler clarified perpetual care funds have

restrictions (including maintaining principal). Mr. Smithson discussed the concept of incremental adjustments. Mr. Duntz asked when fee discussions would occur; Mr. Mohler indicated later, and Mr. Smithson suggested working through them during meetings to avoid rushing. Mr. Mohler confirmed all fee changes must go through the Commission and noted there have been no fee increases since 2014. Other cities' prices were discussed for comparison.

Returning to prioritization, Mr. Duntz asked whether anyone disagreed with the proposed order; Mr. Fowles stated the order made sense as presented.

F. NEW BUSINESS

Suggested that at the next board meeting there be a discussion focused on fees, including a presentation on fees and applicable rules/regulations.

Mr. Akins asked whether changes can be made to the cemetery software, noting that GPS is not displaying and the system does not show grave space locations. Mr. Mohler responded that Sunrise has grave space information available, but Sunset does not, and noted that the All Funeral software has not tracked locations by individual grave space.

Mr. Akins commented that the older system was more user-friendly and questioned why staff must use a mobile app to access information, stating it does not make sense to require an app when using a PC. Discussion followed regarding options to make the information available online via a web interface rather than through apps. Mr. Smithson stated staff would take a look at it. Mr. Mohler added that the phone app will not display GPS.

Mr. Mohler thanked Mr. Akins for locating and "pinging" corner markers. He noted that by using metal markers they can be found with a metal detector. Mr. Mohler also reported that they identified discrepancies between burial records and grave locations that need correction, including baby graves that were numbered backwards. Mr. Akins noted that All Funeral's had taken good photos.

Mr. Mohler raised a concern that GPS at Sunset appears to be identifying the headstone location rather than the grave location. Mr. Akins stated the accuracy is within approximately 15 feet. Mr. Smithson noted that visitors are typically looking for the marker/headstone anyway. Mr. Mohler agreed but emphasized that the issue is more significant where no stones/memorials exist, contributing to a higher number of unknown burials due to missing memorials.

G. Meeting adjourned.