



Legislation Text

File #: 22-2193, **Version:** 1

Planning and Building Department, Cemeteries Division, recommending the Board receive and file an update to the work plan for administration of El Dorado County-managed cemeteries.

FUNDING: Fees for services, plot sales, parcel taxes for the Georgetown Cemetery Zone of Benefit, General Fund.

DISCUSSION / BACKGROUND

The Cemeteries Division manages seventeen (17) public cemeteries, providing burial and other services to residents and non-residents of El Dorado County. Eight (8) of the 17 cemeteries are active, and staff handle an average of forty-five to fifty (45-50) burials per year. The Facilities Division performs landscape maintenance at ten (10) of these cemeteries and the Cemeteries Division manages contracts and contractors to provide landscape maintenance at five (5) cemeteries while volunteers provide occasional landscape maintenance at two (2) cemeteries. The Division also sells plots, crypts, and niches, arranges burials, and performs research to provide information to queries from the public about previous burials or other questions about El Dorado County cemeteries. The Division also assists with the work of two advisory committees: the Georgetown Zone of Benefit Advisory Committee and the countywide Cemetery Advisory Committee.

In 2018, the Chief Administrative Office, Cemeteries Division, presented an update to the Board on cemeteries within El Dorado County (Legistar Number 18-0987). During the presentation it was noted that compared to other counties in California, El Dorado County is unique in the number of cemeteries it oversees and that most jurisdictions utilize special districts to oversee their cemeteries. Given the County's limited General Fund, this unique situation makes County management of its cemeteries especially challenging.

On September 10, 2019 (Legistar Number 19-1323), the Board directed staff to formulate a plan for a cemeteries Zone of Benefit (ZOB) on the West Slope. On November 5, 2019 (Legistar Number 19-1585) staff returned with the required hearing for the parcel tax proposal associated with the ZOB. The Board approved the formation of the Western Slope Cemetery ZOB within County Service Area 9 subject to voter approval in the November 2022 election. On May 24, 2022 (Legistar Number 22-0712), at the recommendation of the Cemetery Advisory Committee, and due to the current economic climate, the Board decided to not move forward with the ballot measure for a Cemetery ZOB. The Board requested staff to bring forward other recommendations for supporting cemeteries. Recommendations from staff include increasing services offered within the County's cemeteries, updating the fees charged for services, and recruiting volunteers to handle some of the work needed in and related to managing cemeteries.

At the June 6, 2021 budget workshop, staff alerted the Board that work had commenced on an updated Cemeteries Work Plan. The Work Plan (Attachment B) incorporates tasks that are required, as well as tasks that would improve and expand the services provided by the Cemeteries Division to citizens. The Work Plan includes work that was budgeted in the last fiscal year and the current fiscal year, as well as tasks laid out for the following three years. The Work Plan has been updated to show

tasks that have been completed, as well as tasks that are in progress.

The most significant constraint to accomplishing tasks was the lack of staff resources. The Cemeteries Division wishes to thank the Board for approving an additional staff person, split 80/20 with the Airports Division. With the additional staff person, staff have been able to complete several tasks of long-standing duration, as well as make progress on completing tasks on the Work Plan.

The Board requested staff to provide an update on ideas to increase funding for Cemeteries outside of the General Fund. Staff are increasing efforts to recruit volunteers to provide assistance with tasks in our cemeteries. There has been success in recruiting neighbors of the Cold Springs Cemetery to perform limited landscape maintenance on a Saturday in October. Additional volunteers were used at the Placerville Union Cemetery prior to the Save the Graves event in October. The results were not the same as using landscape maintenance contractors, but some work was completed at both cemeteries. Additionally, Cemeteries and Facilities staff have worked collectively to have Growlersburg provide some maintenance services at several cemeteries.

Staff continue to identify and develop a number of potential ways to marginally increase revenue outside of a ballot initiative, including: increasing the visibility of County cemeteries through joint marketing efforts with the El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce and El Dorado County Visitors Authority; developing County cemeteries to provide services that are more in line with the needs and wishes of El Dorado County citizens, such as adding niches and developing new sections for in-ground cremains plots, green burials, scattering grounds, and ossuaries; and updating the fee schedule to ensure fees charged by the County for provided services are more in line with what other cemetery service providers are charging. The results of the Fee Study will be available soon, but staff will need to conduct benchmark studies of other cemeteries' fees to finish updating our current fee schedule (staff hope to use volunteers for the benchmarking project).

Operating in a resource-constrained environment remains the biggest challenge for the Cemeteries Division.

ALTERNATIVES

NA

PRIOR BOARD ACTION

Legistar File No. 19-1585 (Hearing for Western Slope ZOB formation, Item 41, 11/5/19), Legistar File No. 19-1323 (Western Slope ZOB formation approval and adoption of Resolution 148-2019, Item 25, 9/10/19), Legistar File No. 18-0987 (cemetery program presentation, Item 55, 6/26/18), Legistar File No. 17-1213 (ACPP approval, Item 56, 6/26/18).

OTHER DEPARTMENT / AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

NA

CAO RECOMMENDATION / COMMENTS

Receive and file as recommended.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact or change to Net County Cost associated with this item.

CLERK OF THE BOARD FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

None

STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENT

Economic Development, Good Governance, Healthy Communities, Infrastructure

CONTACT

Chris Perry, Cemetery Director
Assistant Director
Planning and Building Department