

DISCUSSION PAPER # 7
CEMETERY MAINTENANCE PLAN

Friends Poulsbo Cemetery (FPC) - Revised March 27, 2018

DISCUSSION GOAL - Prepare for the Poulsbo Municipal Cemetery Master Plan and representatives of North Kitsap Cemeteries projects and programs for a cemetery maintenance (preservation) plan.

Purpose Poulsbo Municipal Cemetery Maintenance (Preservation) Plan would provide the budget for the general cemetery care, including administration, operations, maintenance and improvements as administered through the city Department of Public Works.

Cemetery "Preservation" Plan is defined as the retention of the cemetery historic features through conservation, maintenance, and repair. By preserving a cemetery, community groups or individuals take steps to protect the cemetery's form, features, and details. In the case of historic cemeteries, preservation can include measures such as cleaning the site, repairing or re-installing fences, maintaining landscaping, cleaning markers, and resetting and repairing gravestones. The City of Poulsbo does not have a preservation plan for the city cemetery.

Question - *Should expectations for care of monuments and grave plots be shifted to the city?*

Established nearly a century ago, care of plots in the cemetery was expected to be done by local families of the deceased. In the 21st Century, many of those descendants are now living far away.

Should the city amend the cemetery ordinance to assume care of all graves after a defined time period?

It is worth considering, because some graves are neglected with neither the city nor family members attending to tilted monuments or other problems.

Constraints Poulsbo Municipal Cemetery - The following constraints on cemetery operations and improvements were recognized at the start of the city 2016-2017 cemetery improvement project. These constraints are:

A. Unlike many other cemeteries, there is no perpetual care fund in existence to provide for the routine cost of cemetery operations, maintenance, or improvements.

B. The Cemetery Reserve Fund, which receives money from the occasional sale of burial plots, accumulates funds very slowly and can be depleted very quickly. For this reason, the City Council has historically avoided large expenditures from this fund for improvements unless absolutely necessary.

C. Several individual graves or family lots (composed of six adjacent graves) have tilted or damaged monuments, or concrete borders that are cracked due to apparent earth movement. The existing city ordinance (Chapter 2.76 of the Poulsbo Municipal Code, Section 2.76.190, and Item D [Enclosure 1]) requires cemetery lot owners to keep all grave markers or monuments in good repair. The ordinance specifically states that "the city does not maintain, repair, or replace any grave marker or monumental structure erected upon the grave site."

D. Maintenance, landscaping, and routine care of the overall cemetery are provided from the Public Works Department budget of the General Fund. This fund is supported by taxpayers. With the many needs of the city competing for limited tax monies, the cemetery is normally considered a low priority. The likelihood of a substantially increased cemetery operating budget or use of tax-generated funds for cemetery capital improvements is low. For these reasons, it was clear that contributed funds, donated site upgrades and volunteer involvement would be the keys to improvements.

Minimum Cemetery End-State Desired - The City cemetery committee determined the following were minimum items to be in place for future successful cemetery operations:

- A. A biennial inventory of problems and efforts/funding need to resolve them.
- B. A biennial update to the current city cemetery ordinance.
- C. An illustrated comprehensive master cemetery plan (with vision/mission).
- D. An annual focused City Council review of cemetery operations/plans/budgets.
- E. Maintaining a list of proposed improvements/projects for future accomplishments along with the creation of a method/procedure/entity for accomplishing those projects.
- F. A defined method of collecting & expending donations for cemetery improvements (the city would not conduct fund-raising but could accept donations specified for cemetery projects).
- G. An annual community cemetery event (a public activity held there, along with an annual cleanup day that precedes it) to keep the cemetery in the public mind as a local historical landmark and place for civic involvement.
- H. Conduct a thorough review of city policy, ordinances, and desk manuals to insure they follow the vision and mission for the cemetery as contained in a Master Cemetery Plan.

Objectives Cemetery Maintenance Plan - While immediate physical improvements were sought and accomplished by the city cemetery committee, the ultimate objective of the city 2016-2017 cemetery improvement project was to build public support for the city cemetery. That support calling for a volunteer group of citizens to carry forward the momentum for cemetery improvements. The improvements to include: Volunteer adoption by community organizations or businesses of cemetery sections for routine mowing, raking, weeding and watering.

- Raising funds for future improvements, and cooperate with the City of Poulsbo to determine ways to accomplish more improvements.
- Liaison with families of deceased and assist with upkeep on neglected graves where family members cannot be identified or located.
- Find solutions to toppling monuments on private graves and cracked plot borders.
- Create a website for the group that includes history/genealogical information
- Determine community service group responsible for flag placement on veteran graves for Memorial Day, Veterans Day and Wreath Day (December 16).
- Recruit volunteer individuals or community group to coordinate flagpole use (once it is installed)
- Provide inputs to City of Poulsbo on cemetery operations from the perspective of the public and families of the interred
- Cooperation with City of Poulsbo to determine additional needed improvements and methods to accomplish them.

Email thoughts and suggestions on this discussion paper to:

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Friends Poulsbo Cemetery is a discussion group. Papers on a Poulsbo Cemetery Master Plan and issues and needs of North Kitsap cemeteries are circulated via email for comment and suggestions.