

CHAPTER V: MAINTENANCE PLAN

As noted earlier in this document, the Poulsbo Municipal Cemetery is not a perpetual care facility. Plots in the cemetery are to be maintained by families of the deceased. Basic care of the rest of the site is provided by the City's Public Works staff. Such care involves limited seasonal mowing, limited trimming and removal of vegetation in public spaces, and more recently trash collection services. "Doggie mitts" are also provided.

There are two underlying policy reasons for the City's modest involvement/investment in maintenance. One reason is to keep costs down so that the purchase price of plots can remain affordable by all who wish to be interred at this cemetery. The other reason is to strike an appropriate balance between the expenditure of public funds and the responsibility of plot owners who (along with their families) are the primary users and beneficiaries of the Cemetery.

With the passage of time, plot owners' descendants may themselves be deceased or may be living far away. Some graves are neglected with neither the City nor family members attending to overgrown vegetation, tilted monuments, or other problems. Even as these needs go unmet, establishing the Cemetery as an open air historical space will further increase maintenance requirements and cost. The remainder of this chapter recommends an approach for addressing this dilemma. Chapter VII contains suggestions for funding future maintenance needs and capital improvements.

The Cemetery site is comprised of four "tiers" as delineated by the interior north-south roadways. The three uphill tiers contain the oldest grave sites. The fourth tier is a level area at the base of the hill. No plots have yet been sold in this lower area. The City should take this opportunity to create a different character, with different standards and maintenance plans, for the lower level tier versus the hillside tiers.

Hillside Tiers:

Due to topography, historical usage, and lack of irrigation, the upper three "tiers" of the Cemetery have maintenance challenges. Some grave sites are well cared for; other sites are not. It should remain the primary responsibility of families of the interred to maintain the privately owned plots. The City should continue to provide a basic level of maintenance for the hillside portion of the Cemetery. In addition, this Master Plan recommends the following:

* An annual cleanup day should be held on the first Saturday each May. The initial such event occurred on May 5, 2018. Volunteers from the community were recruited to trim vegetation, pick up debris, and tidy up neglected grave sites. The City provided equipment and limited staff, along with follow-up mowing and chipping/composting of vegetation debris. The timing of this cleanup in early May is intended to make the grounds presentable for Memorial Day activities as recommended in Chapter III of this Plan. The annual cleanup is also intended to keep the Cemetery in the public mind as a local historical landmark and place for civic involvement.

* An "Adopt-A-Tier" program should be established. This would be analogous to similar volunteer programs elsewhere for litter control and roadside cleanup. Efforts should be made

to recruit organizations and/or individuals who will take responsibility to look after designated sections of the Cemetery hillside. Potential sources of such volunteer help include: descendants of people interred at the Cemetery; local churches; local nurseries; local service clubs; local schools; youth groups; genealogical organizations; garden clubs; local nurseries or other businesses; homeowners associations; and perhaps the Poulsbo Historical Society, Sons of Norway, or other organizations with an interest in preserving the site for heritage and open space purposes.

* Over the years, unwanted shrubs and trees have sprouted and grown on the hillside. There are also large trees which have been planted in some of the plots. In some ways, the vegetation has created a desirable visual character to the hillside with partially covered areas for strolling, enjoyment, and contemplation. Yet some of the vegetation has grown in inappropriate ways, blocking views and creating potential hazards from diseased trees or falling limbs. A balance needs to be struck between desired, mature landscaping and control of unwanted vegetation. With input from the City Arborist, the City's Tree Board, and adjacent property owners, the City should identify heritage trees to be protected as well as vegetation to be limbed or removed. A listing should be made of the types and locations for permissible future plantings. Undesirable shrubs and trees which sprout up should be removed before reaching a height of 4 feet.

Lower Tier:

The flat westernmost portion of the site affords unique opportunities for future use and associated maintenance. No plots have yet been sold on this tier. Standards and upkeep for this portion of the Cemetery should be different from the upper hillside tiers. As noted in Chapter IV, sprinkler irrigation should be installed on the lower tier before plots are sold. Grave sites, structures, pathways, and landscaping should be designed for ease of mowing and maintenance. Rather than rely on "Adopt-A-Tier" volunteers, the City should be responsible for providing an enhanced level of maintenance for the lower tier. This includes responsibility for the covered structure, columbarium, memorial plaza, flagpole, walkways, informational signage, ashes garden and other public amenities. Fees for purchase of grave sites and columbarium niches should reflect this higher level of maintenance provided by the City. People would have a choice of purchasing less expensive hillside plots (and accept greater responsibility for maintenance) or purchasing more expensive plots on the lowest tier where enhanced City maintenance is provided. Alternatively, rather than have differential fee structures, the City Council could increase the current annual expenditure so that a higher level of maintenance is provided on all tiers of the Cemetery.

NOTE: Chapter VII of this Master Plan indicates the City may consider leasing the lower tier of the Cemetery to a reputable funeral home. If such an arrangement were pursued, aspects of maintenance for the lower tier could become the lease holder's responsibility.