

Girdwood Cemetery Committee

Date: June 15, 2023

12PM

Minutes Final

This meeting is taking place via teams with in-person attendance in the Girdwood Community Room, 250 Egloff Rd.

The Girdwood Board of Supervisors, its committees, and subcommittees are subject to the Alaska Open Meetings Act as found in Alaska Statute 44.62.310 and Anchorage Municipal Code 1.25 - Public Meetings.

The Girdwood Cemetery Committee operates under the Girdwood Public Meetings Standards of Conduct.

Call to order 12:06PM Tommy O'Malley, Chair

Attending are: Tommy O'Malley, Briana Sullivan, Mike Edgington, Guy Wade, Rachel Bernhardt, Jack Goodnoe
Guy Wade is now the GBOS member overseeing parks and recreation and cemetery projects.

Introduction of Guests: Jack Goodnoe is contractor who developed the Schematic Design for the cemetery under contract through CRW. Rachel Bernhardt represents Alaska Natural Burial group, who are working with HLB to secure a space for natural burials in South Anchorage.

Agenda Approval for June 15 2023 meeting Briana/Mike Assent

Old Business:

1. Discuss bonding in Spring 2024 election

- Update on status of cemetery as Areawide service: Assembly is expected to address this and pass AO 2023-58 at their June 20 meeting. This will formally put cemetery construction, maintenance and operation under Areawide responsibility. It has been noted by Assembly that this could be confusing as GVSA has Cemetery powers, which were acquired for the purpose of study of a cemetery site and creation of design plans, a task that has now been accomplished. GBOS has already written a resolution supporting Assembly adoption of AO 2023-58, further clarification about intent of GVSA Cemetery Power upon approval of AO and successful bonding of new cemetery would alleviate concerns of future use of the GVSA power.

Additionally, Anchorage Municipal Cemetery is overseen by a Cemetery Advisory Board. It is recommended that seats are added to that board for representation of other cemeteries. Jack Goodnoe notes that Girdwood will have different rules regarding burial, fees, etc and will want to have a strong voice in the formalization and setting of those rules.

With conclusion of use of MOA Cemetery Power, it is likely that Cemetery Committee will instead become a "friends" group or possibly a completely grassroots group, which would advocate for cemetery projects in a way similar to the tennis committee or skate park committee.

Motion:

Girdwood Cemetery Committee moves to recommend a GBOS Resolution of Support that restates GBOS support for AO 2023-58 and clarifies that GVSA intends not to exercise Cemetery power after a construction bond for a Girdwood cemetery passes and requests inclusion of a member from Girdwood on the Anchorage Cemetery Advisory board.

Motion by Mike Edgington, 2nd Rachel Bernhardt

Motion carries by assent vote

- Status of MOA bond propositions
Once AO 2023-58 passes, construction projects will be added to the MOA Capital Improvement Project (CIP) list and will be forwarded to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to work on budgets and Legal dept for language to be drafted for Assembly to review and vote to add to bond propositions for voters in Spring 2024.

Eagle River has requested \$1.5M in state funding for purchase and construction of their cemetery. If this goes forward, the request on the bond will be lowered by \$1.5M. There are also projects at the Anchorage Memorial Park intended to be included in the bond proposition.

- Assembly support
Cemetery project had great support from Assembly for Spring 2023 election. The legal issue of cemetery as an Areawide power stopped the project at that time. Currently Tommy has support of Zach Johnson and Kevin Cross for the bond.
- Review Fact Sheet and talking points – topic delayed until passage of AO 2023-58 is complete.
- Discuss groups/dates to address targeted voting population prior to vote-by-mail – this topic delayed until farther along in the bonding approval process.

2. Update on status of request for Girdwood Inc Account and authorized members of GTC to the account

Tommy will follow up with Girdwood Inc. It will be necessary for the Cemetery Committee to fundraise to promote bond with non-municipal funds and they will need a place to hold those funds under a non-profit.

3. Girdwood Archeological Report 2021

Item brought forward by Merle Akers, who expressed concern about the status of gravesites from the original Girdwood Cemetery, which was located at the entry to the valley roughly downhill from the USFS station in an area that was disturbed to create the bridge abutments for the bridge that spans the RR tracks. Location and disturbance of gravesites has been confirmed by Dorothy Hibbs, who was postmaster in Girdwood at the time.

DOT construction of the bridge abutments for the bridge over the railroad tracks found remains of 6 people. DOT recorded that the remains were relocated to the cemetery in Hope/Sunrise, however none are recorded as having been received there. Remains of one person was recorded as reburied in Seward Cemetery. An archeological report in 2021 identified possible additional burial sites, although it is inconclusive and suggests additional study. Although the ultimate handling of the remains is unclear, it is clear that DOT found remains during their construction of the current Alyeska Highway alignment. Realignment of the Alyeska Highway and interchange would likely impact that area. Regardless, a study to determine if the sites noted in the archeological report should be completed. State of Alaska Office of Historic Preservation has provided information that DOT will be responsible for study and handling of any artifacts and remains found in future disturbance/construction related to highway. This should be handled in the Environmental Impact Study (EIS) that will be part of the project. If Girdwood has a cemetery then, the remains could be relocated to it.

New Business

None

Public Comment: None

Other Business: Next meeting tentatively set for July 20 12PM

Adjourn 12:45PM