

APPROVED

5-0-0-0

DATE: August 20, 2008

SUBJECT: Palmdale Cemetery Update and Proposed Resolution No. CC 2008-111 - A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Palmdale Authorizing the Office of the City Attorney and the Department of Public Works to Review all Requests to Restore Gravesites at the Palmdale Cemetery

ISSUING DEPARTMENTS: City Attorney & Public Works

I. SUMMARY

Issues

Should the City Council adopt Resolution No. CC 2008-111 - A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Palmdale Authorizing the Office of the City Attorney and the Department of Public Works to Review all Requests to Restore Gravesites at the Palmdale Cemetery?

Recommendation

Adopt Resolution No. CC 2008-111.

Fiscal Impact

None.

II. BACKGROUND

At the July 16, 2008 City Council meeting, the City Council received an update regarding the Palmdale Cemetery. At this meeting, the City Council directed staff to provide answers to several questions from the public and the City Council.

III. DISCUSSION

Staff discussed several issues related to the Palmdale Cemetery and makes the following recommendations:

Hours of Operation

The cemetery was recently secured and has been locked during evening and night hours. Generally, the cemetery has been open to the public during daylight hours. Staff recommends that regular hours be established and, at this time, those hours be set at 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., seven days a week.

Parking

At this time, parking is generally limited to the street parking around 20th Street East. During special events, cars have been parked on the dirt area to the south of the cemetery. This area is located where the old Avenue S transition existed prior to the Avenue S realignment. Staff recommends that the dirt area to the south of the cemetery be improved, when funds are available, to create a parking lot. The Department of Public Works will, in the future, develop a project to have that area graded and surfaced.

Access

Currently, the cemetery may be accessed, during daylight hours, through the south side pedestrian gate. Staff recommends that, in the future, access be provided through the South Entry (off of 20th Street East). The Department of Public Works will, when funds are available, develop a project to place a bollard in the south driveway to prevent unauthorized vehicle access and install a walkway from the proposed parking area to the South Entry.

Veteran's Memorial Maintenance

A local service organization has agreed to replace the flags, repair the lighting, and pay for the electricity at the cemetery's Veteran's Memorial. The City will maintain the flagpole and associated hardware. Staff has met with the service organization and provided them with a key so that they can access the cemetery while it is closed.

Location Map

A member of the public suggested the placement of a map at or near the Palmdale Cemetery. This map would identify the gravesites and direct visitors to the desired grave site(s) within the cemetery. The City could consider placing a map outside of the cemetery identifying the location of known gravesites. However, based on recent surveys, there may be as many as 73 unmarked gravesites within the cemetery. Further, the City does not have the documentation to identify those interred in unmarked graves. Staff recommends that the City solicit information from the public regarding the names of the individuals interred in the unmarked graves and revisit the installation of a location map when the cemetery is dedicated as a Pioneer Memorial Park.

Restoring Gravesites

At the July 16, 2008 City Council meeting, Staff advised the City Council that Resolution 2006-196 had created a framework to allow relatives to restore gravesite but had not addressed all of the potential requests from the public. Specifically, the intent of Resolution 2006-196 was to preserve the dignity of the Palmdale Cemetery and those interred there, while retaining the cemetery's historic significance and western high desert appearance. As a result, Resolution 2006-196 allowed relatives of the deceased interred at the Palmdale Cemetery a period of one year from the date the cemetery was secured to restore or replace any deteriorated, vandalized, or previously removed grave markers, monuments, headstones, or other embellishments located on the graves of their relatives. It also allowed relatives of the deceased interred at the Palmdale Cemetery a period of one year from the date the cemetery was secured to place grave markers, monuments, or headstones similar to those already existing at the Palmdale Cemetery, but in no instance taller than three feet from the ground, on the graves of their relatives.

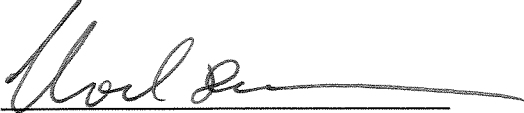
However, after receiving requests from the public, it became apparent that the resolution did not take into account all possible requests. Some of these requests appear to be within the spirit of, but are not specifically allowed by, Resolution 2006-196. In an effort to allow those requests that appear to be within the spirit of Resolution 2006-196, Staff recommends that the City Council authorize the Office of the City Attorney and the Department of Public Works to review all requests to restore grave sites. Upon review of the requests, the Office of the City Attorney and the Department of Public Works will grant those requests that preserve the dignity of the Palmdale Cemetery and those interred there, but that will not detract from the cemetery's historic significance or its western high desert appearance. Adoption of Resolution 2008-111 will authorize the Office of the City Attorney and the Department of Public Works to review all requests to restore grave sites; grant those that are within the spirit of Resolution

2006-196; and develop and enforce criteria to ensure that all restoration work is performed in a responsible manner.

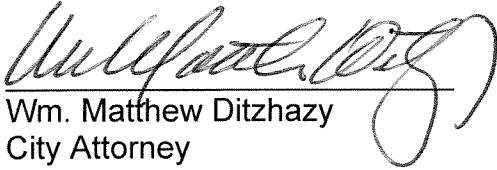
Respectfully submitted by:



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