

Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: September 17, 2026

Commissioners Present: Jennifer Diaz, Nancy Kirby, Miles McCallum, Alexandra Millar-House, Mary Wesley

Staff Present: Holli Bushnell, Steve Bachand, Sophie Sauve

Meeting was called to order 4:38pm at by Chair Jennifer Diaz

I. Approval of Agenda

Diaz moved to adopt the agenda, Mary Wesley and Alexandra Millar-House moved to second, all were in favor

II. Approval of minutes from 6/18/2026

Diaz moved to approve the minutes, Miles McCallum seconded, all were in favor

III. Public Forum

Public forum was opened at 4:54pm, as no one was present or wished to speak, public forum was also closed at 4:54pm

IV. Welcoming New Commissioner

Miles McCallum introduced himself. He shared that he is coming to the commission from a historic preservation based perspective and is very interested in working at Elmwood. The rest of the commission introduced themselves to McCallum, sharing a bit about their interests. Steve Bachand and Sophie Sauve introduced themselves as well. McCallum concluded his introduction by inviting the commission to a grave themed event at the Burlington History and Cultural Center.

V. Family Interment Policy

Bachand emailed everyone a copy of proposed interment policy. He explained that there have been issues with multi-generational lots that have led to disputes about who can and cannot be buried in the graves. The questions we have come up with are, should the decision require a majority of owners to agree or should it be 100% agreement from the all family members within the current generation of ownership. Bachand then related a story of a family where the parents purchased a multi-grave lot and then both had passed. After their passing, their four children would be considered owners of the lot by our current policy. One of the siblings passed



away and her son wished to inter her with her parents. Two brothers agreed to have the deceased sister buried in the lot, but the remaining sister did not agree. This turned into a legal battle and is one of the main reasons we are looking to set a policy.

Diaz shared that she feels the most prudent and fair way is if the Power of Attorney for the deceased to be interred should have the decision deferred to them. This is a final resting place. There should not be a fight.

Bachand added that, in his personal opinion, we are not and cannot be a family court. If the family can't figure it out then there is no burial. It's such a tough call and it's hard to find the right answer.

McCallum asked what the parameters are for who counts as family. He likes the idea of having the POA be the final arbiter because it sidesteps the parameters of "family."

Bushnell explained that, in our current policy, one someone purchases a lot they and their spouse are considered owners (unless otherwise specified). When the original owners pass, the lot then passes to the next generation, the children of the original owners (she encourages new purchasers to designate a point person or new owner in their wills). Once everyone from the children's generation passes, lots will then be owned by any and all grandchildren. This is why we have some lots that require the agreement of over a dozen people for burial to take place. Diaz felt that it makes sense to have a legal person be the determinant factor if a dispute arises (a POA or other legal representative).

Bachand explained that we now use a lot purchase agreement which contains language to prevent this from happening in the future. We now ask for owners to designate "people approved to be buried in the lot" and "People (other than Lot owners) authorized to schedule grave openings" in hopes of mitigating this issue in the future.

Diaz asked if the form should also as for POA information.

Bachand felt that that would be a question for the city attorney. Unfortunately Hayley was not able to join the meeting today. Bachand asked commissioners to email Steve and/or Hayley with their questions.

VI. Green Burial Fees (action)

Bachand shared the proposal for new pricing. We are getting close to making green burial lots available for purchase. At the moment, our regular size graves are 3 1/2' by 11' or 38.5 sqft. This works out to \$29.43 per square foot, and that is what we're basing the green burial lot price on. Green lots are 5'x 12', and for a space that is 60 sqft the cost should be \$1765 based on the existing square footage rate. This is also true for the non-residents rate (currently \$46.81 per sqft). For non-residents, green burial lots should be \$2808. That's what staff is proposing to charge for green burials

Diaz asked how our rates compare to other cemeteries.



Bachand explained that North Hero charges \$400 for their lots, and they really just made that price up. The proposed rate is based on the square footage pricing we're charging now. To him that seems like the fairest way to figure it out.

McCallum asked if there is a reason green burial lots are larger.

Bachand explained that 5 ½' x 12' is the standard size nationwide for green/natural burial so that will be the policy we will follow.

Diaz asked if the prices listed were the total cost for interment or just the lot purchase price.

Bushnell interjected that it is just the lot purchase price.

Bachand continued that we're going to have a sort of menu for people. There will be lots of options for lowering. We've learned from other green cemeteries that traditional lowering devices do not work for green burial. We will have options for families like hemp rope, pine boards, wood chips, and other things that that will be added on to the final burial price.

Bachand will send the policy to everyone to review and is happy to answer questions.

Diaz shared that she quickly searched for city cemetery pricing for burials and found that our rates are pretty comparable to the national average.

Millar-House asked if the pricing will limit who is able to purchase these lots. The rates are cost prohibitive for a lot of people

Wesley appreciates the way the new prices were calculated. She also reminded the commission that there are some things about green burial that will be less expensive (no embalming, no casket, etc...)

Diaz feels comfortable with the current proposed pricing. She asked if all were in favor of the proposed pricing structure. The motion passed unanimously. Bachand will bring the proposal to Board of Finance and the City Council for approval through them and then we should be all set to move forward.

VII. Section 8 Plan (update)

Sophie Sauve was present to share an update on the Section 8 work. The project has been going on for a couple of years and we are now in a place where we need to push the project forward because we are starting to run out of grass roads to convert into burial space. Section 8 is the last(ish) undeveloped area in the cemetery. It's a great area with beautiful lake view and old growth trees.

Part of the development of Section 8 was an attempt at maximizing space and providing options for updated burial trends. Some of the mature trees will die out, as they are near the end of their lifespan anyway, but the plan does attempt to maintain the existing canopy. In terms of traditional burials vs cremation burials vs green, we would be adding 138 traditional lots, 208 green burial lots, 772 cremation burial lots (with room for two cremains in each lot). 1544 spaces total, 772 total lots. There will be no burials on the ravine side of the section. In center



there is a plan for cremation lots with tall column monument like what exists in the Louisa Howard Cremation Garden. The plans call for green burial lots across from the existing Muslim section. There is space for future columbariums should we choose to purchase them. The plans feature a central ossuary with chamber for ashes to go into rather than scatter garden with seating all around central area and great lake view. The plans also call for formalizing the roads around the section so maintenance crews can do their jobs.

Millar-House asked if Sauve could you speak to changes from last time the commission saw the plan. Sauve shared that a big changes is the triangle area in the northeast part of the section. Initially, one family wanted to purchase that space to move a private mausoleum onto, but we've changed that are into cremation options that will accommodate multiple people/families. The walkways have been widened for better accessibility. It was also discussed that we may add a pillar obelisk to accommodating green burial folks who want a marker. There is a question of if we actually want more columbariums or if those reserved areas would be more effective as in-ground burial space.

In terms of development we intend to start with the northern area. The next steps are pinning most of section so we can start selling the lots. There are also some burial locations that were identified as being too close to mature trees, so those were removed. Once those mature trees die off we can use their footprint for burial space. Some of section used for leaf debris so we will still have a dirt/junk pile for maintenance.

Millar-House noted that the green burial graves in the north section are still oriented towards Mecca. She wondered if the Islamic Society's decided that they would like green burial lots. Bachand explained that those green burial lots are going to remain for green burials. ISVT has long been advocating for more graves, and we'll be able to accommodate them in this new plan. Bachand will be meeting on 9/30 with ISVT and will know much more after that. The plan is to keep the proposed lots as green burial lots whether it becomes a Muslim section or not. The city attorneys have determined that Muslims can't have their own section anymore unless they purchase them outright. They are not going to like it, but it's what we would do for any large religious group.

Diaz commented that purchasing the lots has point of contention for quite some time. She's looking forward to hearing how the meeting goes. Bachand feels cautiously optimistic that we'll move forward.

VIII. Bulk Lot Purchasing (discussion)

This particular topic comes back to the ongoing conversation about new section and green burial lots. We are no longer allowed to have a religious specific section (unless those religious groups purchase their lots outright). In order for ISVT to have their own section, they need to bulk purchase. Should we allow them to do that? We've never denied bulk purchases before.



Howard Dean bought dozens of lots back in 2014. It would be wrong to say no and not offer that to them.

Millar recalled that the issue we're running into is that we do not want to allow bulk purchase of green burial lots. So if we're offering a bulk purchase of a green burial section does that mean we have to allow bulk purchases in another section.

Bachand countered that we also have to take into consideration that ISVT has asked us for more graves.

Diaz felt that if ISVT decides they want all the lots and to have them be green lots, then it turns into a Muslim section.

Millar asked if the language on the map indicates lots that are not green burial for green burial would that prevent the issue. She explained that she was trying to find ways that we can meet ISVT's need for a bulk purchase in a way that feels fair/equitable. She specifically referenced the triangle area across from the existing Muslim section

Bachand explained that if someone came in tomorrow and wanted to buy the triangle for green burials we would allow it. But that's because there's no existing graves in the triangle. We can't do traditional and green burials next to each other. So a bulk purchase of an undeveloped area is the only way they could get around that. In a non-green part of section 8 we would not allow a bulk purchase of lots for green burial. They would need to purchase in the green section.

Millar-House felt that that distinction might need to be clarified in internal documents.

Bushnell pondered if it would be possible to sell square footage to ISVT instead of lots.

Diaz wondered if there are Muslims who want traditional burial. Bachand explained that, if we're going to sell 67 or 148 graves to ISVT, then we have to allow someone to buy all the green lots if they want. If we allow ISVT to do this do we have to allow individuals to bulk purchase. We've done it before. The issue is that we have a very limited number of green burial lots. The total number is 208. By allowing ISVT to buy 67 would that mean we then allow someone to purchase the other 141 green lots?

Millar-House reiterated that, because this is basically the last developable area of any of our cemeteries we've talked about no bulk purchases at all. Bulk purchases take away from mandate to serve the city population.

Bachand explained that no one knows how quickly we'll sell these lots. With green burials we will be picking the grave, so we're selling burial rights (not how it works for traditional lots). Also keep in mind that we can change things in the future. We could convert traditional graves into green graves in other parts of Section 8.

Millar-House asked if we do not intend to open the whole section at once. Bachand confirmed that this was the case. We may strategically say in house "hold these rows."

McCallum felt that, in regard to bulk purchasing, we don't have an official policy, we're just working on precedent. If ISVT wants to bulk buy, they can because we've set that precedent before. To kick the can down the road a bit we could offer the bulk purchase option to ISVT,



allow them to do what they want, and then make the policy official. Bachand explained that this discussion with ISVT could drag on for another 6 months. But, to recap, we could make this sale to ISVT and then develop a bulk buying policy where the policy officially decided after ISVT purchase is completed.

Diaz asked if there would be issues with symantics of labeling the section "Muslim." Bachand didn't think it would matter because the graves would already sold at that point.

Diaz felt that this conversation will be on going.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:58pm. Diaz moved, Wesley seconded, and all were in favor. The next meeting will be held on October 22, 2026 at the Lakeview Cemetery office and via zoom at 4:30pm