

CEMETERIES BOARD OF TRUSTEES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
City Hall 8th Floor Conference Room
Thursday, July 12, 2007
3:30 p.m.

<u>Board Member</u>	<u>Attendance</u>	<u>Cumulative Attendance</u>	
		<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Alfred Calloway	P	1	0
Victoria Mowrey, Vice Chair	P	3	0
Ann Platt	A	3	1
Jose Portela	P	3	0
Larry Sherman	P	3	0
Susan Telli	P	1	0
Mark Van Rees, Chair	A	2	2

Also Present

Julius Delisio, Cemetery Board Liaison
Jamie Opperlee, Recording Secretary
Lisa Slagle, City of Fort Lauderdale
Cate McCaffrey, Director, Fort Lauderdale Business Enterprises
John Moritz, Carriage Services
Joe Giordano, Carriage Services
Trevor Jackson, Carriage Services
Ani Martinez, Miami Herald
Alan Anchell, Attorney

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Mowrey at 3:35 pm.

1. **Minutes Approval**
 - A. **Meeting of 4/30/2007**
 - B. **Meeting of 5/10/07**

Mr. Calloway stated his first name was Alfred, not Albert.

Motion made by Ms. Telli, seconded by Mr. Calloway, to approve the minutes of the April 30, 2007 and May 10, 2007 meetings as amended. In a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

2. **Old Business**

A. Contract Renewal Carriage Services

Mr. Delisio reminded Board members of that they had approved this at their previous meeting, and it would be presented to the City Commission on Tuesday. Ms. Telli noted that there had been concerns about Carriage in the past, and some concerns still lingered. She wanted the City Commission to be very sure about what they were doing and what their comfort level was, and that Carriage had addressed all their concerns. She wanted to ensure everything that was expedited for families was done in a fair and cautious way.

Mr. Calloway had brought a copy of an article from the Miami Herald regarding an incident at Sunset in which a casket was found floating in an open grave two days after the funeral.

Motion made by Ms. Telli, seconded by Mr. Calloway, to accept the Carriage Services contract renewal.

Mr. Calloway said there had been a couple of incidents at Sunset, and he hoped that these situations had been corrected, and that they would not occur again. He noted these incidents were devastating to families, to the image of the City, and to the Board.

Ms. Mowrey read sections of the article aloud. Mr. Calloway said he felt giving the family a mausoleum was an appropriate resolution to the problem, and reiterated that he hoped this situations would not recur.

Ms. Telli asked Mr. Moritz or Mr. Giordano to address this. Mr. Giordano declined, as the incident was now the subject of a lawsuit from the Williams family. He advised anyone with questions on the matter to contact Carriage's attorney, Brad Green. Mr. Delisio stated he could not discuss the matter on the advice of the City Attorney.

Mr. Calloway felt the most relevant issue was whether or not the issue had been addressed and would not recur in the future. Ms. Telli said the Board's function was to represent the community and do what they could to make sure it was understood that these incidents were unacceptable, and to ensure that occurrences such as this did not happen again. She said this was the third such occurrence at Sunset, and described the incident as "very raw to the families, I'm sure to the funeral home, to Carriage. But more than that, it is raw to this community to have this kind of thing happen." She felt there was no excuse for this kind of problem regardless of the weather, unless there was lightning.

Mr. Delisio reminded the Board that the 2005 incident was a City error, not a contractor error. He said after each incident, corrective action had been taken

and similar incidents had not recurred. Mr. Delisio added that human beings were performing these tasks, so there was always the potential for human error.

Mr. Delisio informed Ms. Telli that Carriage had provided the family with the mausoleum.

Mr. Calloway asked that after the lawsuit was resolved, Mr. Delisio would report back to the Board on actions that would be taken to ensure this could not happen again.

Ms. Telli said she hoped the City Commission would take a good hard look at this when they went into the discussion on Tuesday to renew Carriage's contract. She felt the contract term should be shorter. Mr. Delisio explained that in order to accomplish large capital projects, it would not be financially practical to offer a shorter contract period. Ms. Mowrey assured Ms. Telli that the issues with Carriage were not addressed "speedily or lightly or in any way except for the protection of the cemeteries of the City of Fort Lauderdale."

Mr. Portela asked if a letter of apology or comfort from the City or the Board would be appropriate; the Board agreed this was inadvisable because of the pending litigation.

Board unanimously approved the motion, with Mr. Portela abstaining.

3. New Business

A. Tree Maintenance

Mr. Delisio explained that the trees in Lauderdale Memorial and Evergreen had been of particular concern. At Evergreen, they planned a strategic maintenance project, using the same contractor that they had planned to use for the large project. Mr. Delisio explained that the Australian pines would not be topped off as they had discussed, because of issues with the neighborhood.

Mr. Delisio explained that they would trim anything that sat over cemetery property and might do harm to markers, mausoleums etc. and trim all of the trees within the boundaries of the property in preparation for hurricane season. The same would be done at Lauderdale Memorial. In Sunset and Woodlawn, the contractor had determined there were no trees that posed a significant risk because they were trimmed two years ago.

Ms. Telli said she had visited two of the cemeteries with a landscaper, who thought the four Australian pines in Evergreen were diseased and rotting from the inside out and should be replaced. The landscaper recommended Gumbo Limbo, Green Buttonwood, or any South Florida native tree. Mr. Delisio said the

contractor would begin Monday at Lauderdale Memorial Park, and asked Ms. Telli to go to Evergreen with the contractor to point these Australian pines out. Mr. Delisio remarked on the challenge Evergreen presented to a contractor due to the lack of space for equipment.

Ms. Mowrey asked if anyone had spoken to Parks and Recreation regarding the lake situation in Evergreen. Mr. Delisio said the determination had been made that "we officially own our side; they own their side." He said there was currently an issue with kids swinging from tree limbs into the lake. The City was concerned about kids possibly being impaled on debris when they landed in the lake. Parks and Recreation has placed signs on both sides of the lake stating no swimming, etc.

B. Veteran Memorial Sunset Memorial Gardens

Mr. Delisio said he had wanted for some time to install a memorial to veterans at Sunset. They intended to install a large memorial in front of the new building and designate four rows of prime property for veterans only. Mr. Delisio stated Carriage would pay for the monument, which would include a large eagle they had already acquired, and a bronze memorial plaque that had been ordered.

Ms. Telli remarked on the absence of women depicted on the plaque, and Mr. Calloway noted the absence of African-Americans. Mr. Calloway felt some community members might be offended by this. Mr. Giordano stated the plaque had been a special order from the company and should be delivered within a few weeks.

Mr. Giordano said they had been limited by available styles offered by the bronze company. Mr. Delisio thought there was another bronze specifically depicting African-Americans they might be able to get.

Ms. Telli felt a plaque depicting the diversity of the community should be sought. She suggested this plaque could be used at Lauderdale Memorial. Ms. Mowrey was grateful for Carriage's offer to do this, but agreed that women and people of color must be included on the plaque.

Mr. Delisio suggested they keep this plaque and purchase another one specifically depicting African-Americans and women. Mr. Calloway said, "The problem is the forethought of the manufacturing company that comes up with this type of thing; while their intentions may be as noble as possible, their history is not together, and that's the dynamic that ruins this country, inadvertently or otherwise."

Motion made by Ms. Telli, seconded by Mr. Sherman, to postpone any implementation of this memorial at Sunset until they found a more appropriate memorial for the community.

Mr. Delisio recommended Board members decide what they would like etched on the large granite piece, and present these ideas at the next meeting. Board members agreed they should keep the eagle portion of the monument.

Ms. Telli suggested the Board meet with representatives from one of the community activist leagues, the Art Institute, and Dillard High School art department to create a design for the memorial. Ms. Mowrey suggested they included the Veterans Association in this meeting. Mr. Delisio felt the Board members should make the suggestion, and they could discuss their ideas with the monument company who could produce drawings for the granite etching.

Mr. Calloway suggested just the eagle, a wreath and an inscription, and Board members agreed. The Board wanted to reproduce the quote from the bronze plaque for the granite etching.

Ms. Telli withdrew her original motion.

Motion made by Mr. Calloway, seconded by Mr. Sherman, to use the eagle and a granite monument with a wreath and the inscription from the offered bronze plaque. **Board unanimously approved.**

C. Mausoleum Design Lauderdale Memorial Park

Mr. Delisio said this design for the new building mirrored the design of the existing building, and it was by the same builder. Carriage wanted to move forward with this as soon as the City Commission approved their contract renewal on Tuesday. Carriage would then request approval at the next Board meeting with the State in August.

Mr. Delisio described the design and explained there would be 492 crypts in the first phase. He stated there would not be as many niches as there were in the existing mausoleum; they did not have the demand for niches that they did for full crypts.

Mr. Delisio stated the mausoleum would take approximately one year to build; he hoped it would be completed by late summer or early fall 2008.

Mr. Delisio a described the location of the mausoleum at the corner of State Road 84 and Southwest 9th, in the large vacant field next to the fenced maintenance area. Mr. Delisio felt this was the most appropriate use for the land

in that corner as had been discussed in the previous meetings. He did not believe they could ever sell it for burial space because of the nearby traffic.

Mr. Sherman wanted to know exactly where the mausoleum would be sited. Mr. Delisio drew its approximate location on the corner of State Road 84 and Southwest 9th for the Board to see. Mr. Delisio noted the high current demand for mausoleums, and said they could not accommodate the volume of requests for mausoleum space since the current inventory is depleted.

Mr. Delisio reminded the Board that they were approving the building concept design only, not its exact location and site plan. Mr. Delisio said he would return to the Board with the plans and site plan for their review once these are completed. He reminded the Board that in order to sell pre-need, Carriage must have the approval of the State. Right now, the Board must only approve the design of the building, and the plan to build it on the property.

Miss Mowrey said she always had trouble voting for concepts, because "concepts somehow become permanent fixtures... with little room for adjustment" so she wanted to be clear exactly what the Board was approving. She remembered the Board agreeing in the past that a mausoleum as similar as possible to the existing one would be appropriate. She wanted to be sure that the Board continued to have input in the fine tuning as it went forward.

Mr. Delisio said the Board was giving its approval to allow Carriage to make the request at the state level but added that no changes would be made to the building design. Mr. Delisio hoped to have more specific plans to present to the Board in September.

Mr. Delisio and Mr. Giordano explained the configuration of the mausoleum crypts to Ms. Telli.

Ms. Telli asked about lights in the mausoleums and Mr. Delisio explained to her that there would be no lights because they had proven to be a maintenance issue. Mr. Jackson described issues that had arisen and problems they had experienced with the lighting. Mr. Delisio explained to Mr. Sherman that the lights had been more of a problem than a selling feature. Since the mausoleums were not open at night, the lights were not that visible during the open hours. Mr. Delisio also assured the Board that they would purchase no more vases from Biondi the current vendor.

Motion made by Ms. Telli, seconded by Mr. Calloway, to approve the concept for the mausoleum design. **Board unanimously approved.**

D Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Since all Board members were not present, Board members agreed they should wait until the next meeting to elect the Chair and Vice Chair.

Motion made by Ms. Telli, seconded by Mr. Portela, to table this item to the Board's next meeting. **Board unanimously approved.**

4. Adjournment

The Board's next meeting was scheduled for September 13, 2007.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 4:58 p.m.