



A Tradition of Stewardship
A Commitment to Service

Agenda Date: 3/23/2021

Agenda Placement: 10B

NAPA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS Board Agenda Letter

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Steven Lederer - Director of Public Works
Public Works

REPORT BY: Michael Karath, Staff Services Analyst II - 299-1477

SUBJECT: Public hearing and adoption of a resolution to amend the Monticello Public Cemetery District Fee Schedule

RECOMMENDATION

District Manager requests approval of and authorization for the Chair to sign a resolution approving the following actions:

1. Open the Public Hearing to consider any comments on the amended Monticello Public Cemetery District Schedule of Fees; and
2. Close the Public Hearing and adopt the resolution amending the Monticello Public Cemetery District Schedule of Fees.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Adoption of the resolution will approve revisions to the Schedule of Fees.

The revisions include:

- | Deletion of "Fee for Reinstatement of Reclaimed Burial Plot" that sunsetted on June 30, 2020
- | Increase of burial fees
- | Addition of "Other/Unanticipated Burial Costs" with costs to be determined
- | Increase of engraving service fee to add names in the cemetery's Veterans' Wall

PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS

1. Open Public Hearing

2. Staff reports
3. Public comment
4. Close Public Hearing
5. Motion, second, discussion and vote on the item.

FISCAL & STRATEGIC PLAN IMPACT

Is there a Fiscal Impact?	Yes
Is it currently budgeted?	No
What is the revenue source?	The revenue source is the owners of burial rights in Monticello Cemetery who either need a burial performed or request a deceased person's name, if that person served in the United States military, be engraved on the Veteran's Wall.
Is it Mandatory or Discretionary?	Discretionary
Discretionary Justification:	The MPCD grave digger left abruptly in 2020 to care for a sick relative out of state and had to be replaced. He had commented several times that he lost money providing burial services because the fees were insufficient for him to make a reasonable return. Staff contacted many local and regional cemeteries to inquire about a replacement grave digger. Today, most all cemeteries in the region employ grave diggers on staff, because they have a high number of burials per year with anywhere from 60 to 100 or more annually. The Monticello Cemetery's interments fluctuate between zero and 10 burials per year and cannot afford to keep a grave digger on the year-round payroll. The MPCD therefore needs an experienced, private grave digger who can work on an on-call basis. Staff contacted Curtiss Kelley, who was the Monticello Cemetery grave digger three years ago, to take the job. Mr. Kelley has served as the cemetery's back-up grave digger since then. The burial costs are proposed to be amended at Mr. Kelley's request to allow him to earn a reasonable return for his work.
Is the general fund affected?	No
Future fiscal impact:	The amended fee will allow the cemetery to retain an experienced, licensed grave digger to perform burial services, who has a demonstrated record with the MPCD of professionalism and dependability.
Consequences if not approved:	The MPCD will not have a licensed, on-call grave digger to perform burials and will likely need to ask neighboring cemeteries who have staff grave diggers to assist at a much higher rate than an on-call grave digger.
County Strategic Plan pillar addressed:	
Additional Information:	

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: The proposed action is not a project as defined by 14 California Code of Regulations 15378 (State CEQA Guidelines) and therefore CEQA is not applicable.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Deletion of "Fee for Reinstatement of Reclaimed Burial Plot" that sunsetted on June 30, 2020

In 2012, staff, with the approval of the MPCD Advisory Committee, began a process to discover whether a number of Monticello Cemetery plots had been abandoned, as staff could not reach owners of these burial rights because of obsolete contact information in MPCD files. There were also a number of people claiming MPCD burial rights purchased in the 1960s and 1970s, but could not prove ownership of these rights because they could not locate the documents showing the purchase, and the MPCD also did not have corroborating documents on file. A number of these citizens who still claimed ownership were required to go through a process to reclaim their ownership. The opportunity to reclaim such plots has lapsed, and this fee provision sunsetted on June 30, 2020. Therefore, staff seeks to delete this fee from the Schedule of Fees.

Increase of burial fees

The MPCD grave digger left abruptly in 2020 to care for a sick relative out of state and had to be replaced. He had commented during his tenure that he had often lost money providing burial services because the fees were insufficient for him to make a reasonable return (a portion of each fee goes to the MPCD to recoup administrative costs). Staff contacted 10 local and regional cemeteries to inquire about a replacement grave digger. Staff found that nearly all cemeteries today in the region employ grave diggers on staff, because they have a high number of burials with anywhere from 60 to 100 or more annually. The MPCD's interments fluctuate between zero and 10 burials per year and cannot afford to keep a grave digger on the year-round payroll. The MPCD therefore needs an experienced, licensed, and insured private grave digger who can work on an on-call basis, and the fees collected need to be enough for the grave digger to make a reasonable return for such sporadic work.

After staff unsuccessfully searched outside for a new on-call, licensed and insured grave digger, staff contacted Curtiss Kelley, who had previously served as the MPCD on-call grave digger. He stopped his service three years ago to start his own construction business. Since then, he has served as emergency back-up grave digger for the MPCD. Mr. Kelley expressed interest in returning as the on-call grave digger. On December 16, 2020, the MPCD Advisory Committee unanimously endorsed the hiring of Curtiss Kelley as the District's on-call grave digger, citing his past experience and institutional knowledge of Monticello Cemetery and excellent reputation for his service.

Mr. Kelley requested the proposed burial cost increases to allow him to earn a reasonable return for his work for taking multiple trips from Napa to Monticello Cemetery and taking time off from his business. On January 20, 2021, the MPCD Advisory Committee voted unanimously to send the proposed Schedule of Fees amendments to the MPCD Board of Trustees for approval.

To accommodate Mr. Kelley's contractor business schedule, staff and the Advisory Committee proposed to offer families the choice of a 10 a.m. morning burial service and a 2 p.m. burial service. The morning prices are the most significant increases being proposed, because it would necessitate Mr. Kelley making two trips to the cemetery from Napa - the first trip hauling his backhoe to dig the grave the day before plus a trip to Vallejo for the burial vault (he cannot fit both the backhoe and vault in his truck at the same time); and the second trip the next day to ensure the service goes smoothly and close the grave after the service. For an MPCD family choosing the 10 a.m. service, the casket burial cost would be \$2,700, an increase of \$959 over the current price of \$1,741. The cremains service would be \$1,500, an increase of \$1,046 over the current price of \$454. However, for the 2 p.m. afternoon service, it would only necessitate one trip from Napa to Monticello Cemetery. The costs would be \$1,800 for a casket burial (\$59 increase over current price of \$1,741) and \$1,000 for a cremains burial (a \$546 increase

over the current price of \$454). The Advisory Committee agreed that most families would choose the afternoon service because of price but wanted to offer a morning service for families desiring a morning option.

Staff reviewed the fee schedules of more than 25 public cemeteries in California through the California Association of Public Cemeteries website. Most cemeteries today combine the costs of purchasing the burial right and burial service into one price, so it is difficult to find many accurate comparisons to the MPCD proposed price increases. Staff found that the MPCD prices, when combining the prices of burial rights and burial services, show the MPCD is the middle to lower middle of cemetery pricing. A few cemeteries also offered time choices for burial services.

Addition of "Other/Unanticipated Burial Costs" with costs to be determined

Over the past several years, staff has encountered a number of instances that hampered the operation of Monticello Cemetery and under-compensated the grave digger since the Schedule of Fees did not include a provision for unanticipated burial or other costs. With no such provision for unanticipated costs, a double burial (one casket on top of another), in which the grave needs to be dug much deeper, would cost the same as a single casket burial. Further, large rocks or boulders have been encountered beneath the surface necessitating the renting of special equipment, more digging, and longer hours to prepare the grave. Staff also encountered a number of other unanticipated costs, including a very large deceased person that necessitated an extra large vault, more digging, and more labor hours. Therefore, staff needs the addition to the Schedule of fees of "Other/Unanticipated Burial Costs" to allow the flexibility needed to reasonably address unique situations that may arise and to reasonably remunerate the grave digger for services rendered.

Increase of engraving service fee to add names in the cemetery's Veterans' Wall

Napa Marble on Coombsville Road in Napa is Monticello Cemetery's provider of headstones and engraving on the cemetery's Veterans' Wall, erected six years ago to commemorate those interred in Monticello Cemetery who have served in the U.S. military. Napa Marble's owners requested an increase in the engraving fee, citing the increased costs of labor, travel, and the machinery and tools needed to engrave veterans' names into the cemetery's Veterans' Wall. Therefore, staff requests an increase to the engraving fee for Napa Marble to receive an reasonable return for their services.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- A . Resolution - AATF
- B . Schedule of Fees amended

CEO Recommendation: Approve

Reviewed By: Susan Kuss