

Sunset Hills Cemetery

Twenty-Year Plan

June 1st, 2017

Sunset Hills Cemetery was created in 1910, although the first official burial was in 1872. The Cemetery Advisory Board was created in 1986 and currently has no by-laws. It has operated smoothly, thus a Model Rules of Procedure Statement is being inserted in lieu of by-laws at this time.

Cemetery Advisory Board Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the Cemetery Advisory Board is to advise the Bozeman City Commission and the Parks and Recreation Director regarding short-term policy considerations related to the management, physical grounds, and general environment of the Sunset Hills Cemetery; and the long term planning for perpetual care of the future Sunset Hills Cemetery.

Forward:

The current ambience of the Sunset Hills Cemetery is one of its greatest attributes. The trees and vegetation throughout the cemetery create a sense of serenity and privacy within its boundaries. The fact that two sides of the cemetery border on city parkland is a great asset, as it allows the cemetery separation from, yet convenience to, downtown Bozeman. There is a strong sense of continuity between the older sections of the cemetery and the newer ones. Therefore, the Board would like to see the cemetery continue to develop and build on its present ambience, even as it expands. Our goal for the existing cemetery is to maintain it as it is and to minimize any changes other than those which help limit the long term natural deterioration of its gravestones and structures, consistent with sound financial practices.

The Sunset Hills Cemetery dates to the late 1860s. The site was chosen because it was on high ground and overlooked the tiny settlement of Bozeman. Originally, it looked much like the Story Hills to the north – barren of trees, grass covered and windblown. The cemetery is rich in local history and the town's three founding fathers- John Bozeman, William Beall, and Daniel Rouse- are buried there. Many of Bozeman's place names come from pioneers who settled here in the final decades of the 19th century and are now buried in Sunset Hills.

The cemetery sits between Lindley and Burke Parks and comprises 116 acres, 71 of which are in use. The remaining 45 acres are leased for agricultural purposes. A Perpetual Care Fund has been established to maintain the plots and grounds. A columbarium, located near the center of the cemetery grounds in a park-like setting, is available for cremation interment.

The Cemetery Board advises the City Commission and the Park and Recreation Director regarding policies and decisions affecting the cemetery. It is important the development of the cemetery be consistent with the characteristics of the Bozeman Community Plan. The Board prepared a Cemetery Master Plan (which is similar to the Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails Plan), which the City Commission adopted in July 2004. The Cemetery Board continues to address issues

such as the provision of open space buffers to protect the character and nature of the cemetery as well as trail connections and standards.

Proposals & Recommendations:

1. There has been extensive discussion for a proposed second gate into the cemetery. The selected alternative is approximately 200 feet north on Golf Way at Ellis Street. Public comment to the Board suggests slowing the timing for this new entrance. The Board, architects and city staff all feel this entrance is warranted long term. We recognize that future changes in traffic patterns and continued significant growth in the City may dictate the necessity of adding a second gate in the southeast corner. At present the Buttonwood entrance should remain open year round. Golf Way is currently plowed by the cemetery staff during the winter months. A bike/pedestrian path should be allowed on this pavement spring, summer, and fall.
2. We should install more signage. Rather than street signs at each intersection, it is suggested that some "low key" signs along the roadways supplement a map at the entrance. A computerized map is planned for the kiosk at the Veterans Wall. All signs and structures should be consistent with history, ambience and landscaping of the cemetery.
3. Varietal tree planting should continue such that the newly opened portions of the cemetery have trees that will provide the shade and atmosphere similar to the older parts of the cemetery. New nursery stock should be added annually. The cemetery should continue to thin the old nursery of about 30 large evergreens. The Forestry Division is finalizing the tree inventory, as of November 2015 the inventory was 50% complete; out of the 541 trees inventoried 63.9% are a variety of spruce and 5.5% ash. Estimated value as of that date was over \$3,000,000. Projects based on this report, tree value around \$7,000,000 with 1,100 trees. The Board has decided to add 20 new trees per year. The trees planted each year should alternate between conifer and deciduous tree in order to maintain the urban conifer forest ambience and to add more fall colors to improve the ambience.
4. There is some necessity for paving some of the roadways through the cemetery, but it would be ill advised and inconsistent with traditional ambience to pave the majority of them. Our suggestion is to pave the "arterials" so that necessary traffic will be on a paved surface most of the time. The goal is to maintain appropriate access to places within the cemetery with a combination of paved and gravel roadways. Future plans for a Southwest Montana Veterans Cemetery will create the need for limited parking, ADA compatible access, and bus radius turns in order accommodate increase demands on the cemetery.
5. Understanding the times and customs change, it is anticipated that columbaria and sites for burial ash will need to be continued and, perhaps, increased. In addition, we have, and when appropriate will expand and create sections, for religious groups and other groupings, such as veterans, masons, etc. Continued awareness of changed burial customs and trends is necessary.

6. At present a larger office for the Cemetery Foreman is needed as an addition to the north side of the existing building. There is also need for a better location for lawnmowers. As of 2016, no additions have been made to the Cemetery office building.
7. As the cemetery is expanded for burials, additional watering and underground sprinklers systems will be installed. We also need to address drainage in the areas of expansion. The 2004-2005 water main project was completed. As of 2016, based on the Water Conservation report by Lain Leoniak, the current trend is to reduce the use of treated water.
8. Farming is currently practiced on unused ground. By planting a crop, the farmer essentially maintains the future cemetery land, which would otherwise be a significant expense for the city. (i.e. weed control) During the snow season, other short term use on future cemetery lands, such as skiing and sledding, should be permitted on an annual basis. This activity should be organized in conjunction with the Rec & Parks Advisory Board (RPAB) and with the approval of the Cemetery Advisory Board. We would like to suggest an annual meeting be held between the farmer, the ski club (BSF), the RPAB, and the Cemetery Board to lay out each coming year's plan. This is a change as currently only RPAB writes the document with BSF each year. The Cemetery Board needs to be included in the process.
9. Trails on the perimeter of the cemetery for the "Main Street to the Mountains" trail system should be constructed with a buffer zone. The zone includes irrigated tree planting, three tier smooth wire fencing and lilacs. The feeling the advisory board wants to ensure is a buffer of old growth trees and trails, such that edge burial plots are as attractive as center plots. (https://gisweb.bozeman.net/Html5Viewer/?viewer=cemetery_map)
The interest and needs that could be secured by a well-planned perimeter include the "oasis" atmosphere as included in most cemeteries throughout the USA. Wee-water evergreens and deciduous trees create peaceful shady areas that separate the noise and turmoil of life outside the cemetery. The trails should be constructed as soon as approved and follow irrigation line installation and tree planting. Such trails would have to comply with the City's new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). Trails should be constructed in compliance with the Parks Open Space Trails Plan in effect at the time of construction. Trail corridor width should be 30'. At this time all of the perimeter trail has been completed.
10. The "Friends of Sunset Hills" Veterans memorial fund was organized and began about the end of 2006. Some of the original members were Don Derby, Carl Craft, Russell Tuckerman, Tim Murphy, and Gene Brooks. A 501(c)(3) was created for this fund through the Bozeman Chamber of Commerce in early 2007.

The Friends of Sunset Hills bought the Traveling Vietnam Wall with \$75,000 in donations raised and \$30,000 in-kind donations. This was the 3rd Travelling Wall to be retired, and it had been displayed approximately 70 times over a 5 year period. The Wall was dedicated on the Saturday before Memorial Day in 2008. The Friends of Sunset Hills have recently replaced 10 Wall panels from the Vietnam Wall that were damaged. They have replaced a total of 30 panels since 2008. These panels have been replaced due to damage during the display time or a problem with the coating that can peel when the panel is damaged. The Wall panels that were replaced recently are planned to be sold at auction to raise funds for

the Southwest Montana Veterans Cemetery and for maintenance costs incurred by the Friends of Sunset Hills.

The "All Veterans Memorial Wall" located behind the Vietnam Wall was built later. About 100 plaques have been sold honoring local military Veterans. The plaques for this wall can be ordered and bought through forms available at American Legion Post 14 for \$125.00. Of this cost, \$75 goes to Butte Granite Works for the plaque, and \$50 goes to Friends of Sunset Hills for maintenance and upkeep.

The kiosk that is being completed at this time will show the location of each Veteran buried or interred at Sunset Hills. The Friends of Sunset Hills are working with Rick Fink at the cemetery to add software to locate each Veteran on the Vietnam Wall and veterans resting in Sunset Hills Cemetery. The kiosk is being connected with Century Link, and when all is complete, it will provide the information as well as an available printout of this information.

The Veterans Alliance of Southwest Montana is a Veteran group comprised of representatives from the individual Veteran groups throughout the area. The VASWMT was formed about 6 years ago and is led by Hank Adams from American Legion Post 30. The primary goal of this organization when it was formed was to create a Veterans Cemetery built to VA specifications that could someday be approved as a State or National Veteran cemetery. We wanted and needed a place that would be closer for families than the State Cemetery at Fort Harrison or the National Cemetery at Laurel.

The city of Bozeman granted a section of the Sunset Hills Cemetery for this purpose that is located just east of the Vietnam Wall. The City has also helped us to get plans for a columbarium that will be similar to the one at the State Veteran Cemetery at Fort Harrison and built to VA specs. Cost for this project will come primarily from private donations. A 501(c)(19) was created through American Legion Post 14 in 2016 to collect these funds. It is called the Southwest Montana Veterans Cemetery Fund. As of July 31, 2017 we have \$48,774 in donations. We are planning to build this in phases and hope to begin construction this summer.

Conclusion:

In Conclusion, we believe that maintaining the current ambience of the cemetery is imperative and this can best be accomplished by maintaining proper long term development of vegetation as the current cemetery expands its boundaries. Since future expansion will border on public thoroughfares and private property, we suggest the trail and vegetative buffer that will allow gravesites on the periphery the same sense of privacy and separation from the roadways and homes as gravesites on the interior.