CEMETERY OPERATIONS

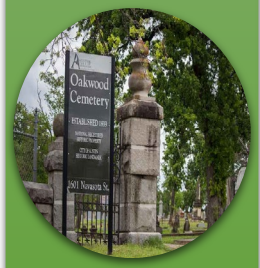
Parks and Recreation Board

August 28, 2023

MISSION STATEMENT | Cemetery Operations strives to honor the past, present, and future of Austin's sacred municipal burial grounds with integrity, empathy, and respect.

VISION STATEMENT | Cemetery Operations utilizes available resources to provide the best quality of service and care to our diverse community and historic cemeteries.

Cemetery Operations and Maintenance Responsibilities History



1839

- Oakwood Cemetery

1872

- Stanley-Nolen

1878

- Cemetery at Longview Park

1898

- Plummers Cemetery

1915

- Oakwood Cemetery Annex

1926

- Evergreen Cemetery

1927

- Austin Memorial Cemetery

The Founding of Historic Cemeteries

Cemetery Operations and Maintenance Responsibilities History

Public Works Department manages cemeteries.

- 26 Full-Time Employees (All are Grounds employees (with 15 Seasonal).
- Public Works management ends in 1986.
- 1990-2013 InterCare assumes management of cemeteries.

Parks and Recreation Department takes on management responsibility.

- 2013- Present
- April 1, 2013, PARD assumed management of the City of Austin municipal cemeteries, and the cemetery team was established to handle the administration, interment, and maintenance functions.
- 28 Full-time Employees: 6 administrative and 22 grounds (8-10 seasonal)
- Cemetery Operations maintain 200+ acres of cemetery land, which consists of over 80,000 burials
- An average of 600 interments per year and 800 space sales

Cemetery Operations and Maintenance Responsibilities History

1990-2013

PARD contracted with a vendor to manage all cemetery responsibilities.

April 2013

PARD began directly managing the sales, operations, and maintenance. PARD contracted with ISI to provide only interments and burials services.

2018 - Present

PARD amended the existing contract with vendor for interments and burial services only and assumed monument settings in-house. Currently, the vendor performs grave opening/closing and graveside preparation and set-up services at all five municipal cemeteries.

Accomplishments

Progression of Cemetery Successes

- Reduced the turnaround time for customers to receive their cemetery deeds and created a more efficient deed process in conjunction with Office of Real Estate Services
- Implemented controls for burials and markings, eliminating risk of double space sales and errors
- Developed a five-year strategic plan (FY 2019 through FY 2024), submitted new Cemetery Rules
- Established full-time maintenance team dedicated to monument installation, setting, and releveling
- Updated and implemented new maintenance practices
- Quarterly clean-up efforts at Cemetery at Longview Park
- Launched Phase I and Phase II of Cemetery Information Management System (CIMS)
- Hired and trained new staff, including a Grounds Manager, Program Manager II, and General Maintenance Supervisor II
- Repaved and curbed roads in Austin Memorial Park

Accomplishments

Progression of Cemetery Successes

(cont'd.)

- Developed public outreach and programming to increase visitation and interest in the cemeteries including updated information brochure of Oakwood Cemetery, Font Treatment for publication, and participation in Austin Museum Day
- Streamlined request process for filming and photography for the cemeteries
- Established process for graffiti removal
- Update of COA website with new project updates, maps, public programming, and additional information
- Evergreen Road Improvements including new curbing
- Evergreen Lighting including the installation of solar and nightwatchmen light for security purposes
- Austin Memorial Park Tower Restroom Renovation
- Annual Partnership with Urban Forestry to coordinate Saluting Branches, which promotes and honors veterans by organizing tree care in cemeteries with a large veteran presence.
- Installation of night-watchmen lights and solar lights at Evergreen Cemetery

Cemetery Operations

Coming Soon…

- Working with Geospatial analysts to develop digital mapping of cemetery in GIS for Maximo
- Opening new sections at Austin Memorial Park Cemetery and Evergreen Cemetery
- Rehabilitating the Oakwood Annex building to serve as a Cemetery Operations conservation and maintenance workshop
- Maintenance yard reorganization to better utilize space and reduce noise levels.
- Digitization of hard copy records of cemeteries
- Installation of signage for self-guided tree tour in the cemeteries
- Historic designation for Evergreen and Plummers
- Headstone Resetting and Releveling Pilot Program
- Cooperative agreement with Texas A&M to perform ground penetrating radar for mapping and documentation purposes at Plummers Cemetery
- Video tour of Evergreen by Save Austin Cemeteries and Multi-Media Maze

Cemetery Operations
Interment Contract

CURRENT

- PARD staff cemetery services include:
  - Sales administration and management (PARD)
  - Cemetery operations and maintenance (PARD)
  - Interment and burial services (Contractual)

- Burial spaces are only sold in Austin Memorial Cemetery and Evergreen Cemetery.

- More than 30 acres of undeveloped land at Austin Memorial Park is available for future burials.

Cemetery Operations
Interment Contract

In **June 2013**, City Council approved a five-year contract, for $3.8 million, with Interment Services, Inc. In **2018 and 2021,** with the direction to return to Council for approval of contract extension options, City Council approved a three-year extension option and a two-year option. Staff estimates the need to continue to outsource **burial and interment services**, thus utilizing the remaining extension option. Without this extension, the contract for burial and interment services expires **November 28, 2023**.

Cemetery Operations

Interment Contract

- One additional 60-month extension option remaining.
  - The Cemetery Division estimates the need to outsource these services for an additional two years with the following conditions
    - Interment Services Inc. will continue with all adult services including any reinterment/disinterment duties,
    - PARD assumes responsibility for all other interment services such as cremations and infant burials.
- At the end of the two-year period, Parks and Recreation Department plans to transition all burial and interment services to PARD personnel.
  - An extension to the contract allows staff time to absorb the increased responsibilities and duties associated with the mandated operational expansion along with current job duties and responsibilities including grounds maintenance and monument installations, re-sets, and re-levels.
- The lingering economic conditions created by the pandemic created challenges and obstacles for Cemetery Operations to fully hire the necessary staff to train for the additional interment/burial services.
- The same complications resulted in longer than anticipated supply chain issues with purchasing and acquiring the necessary equipment necessary to perform these duties and to ensure proper staff training operations.

Requested Committee Action

Recommend that the City Council authorize the negotiation and execution of an amendment to an existing contract with Interment Services, Inc. for continued interment services at city cemeteries and to extend the term by two years.