

SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
July 25, 2007

The Special City Council Meeting was called to order by Mayor Muschell at Pinehill Cemetery, Pinehill Avenue, Cheboygan, Michigan at 6:30 p.m. The proceedings were as follows:

Present: Council Members Tebo, Lepp, Riddle, Sangster, Charboneau, Muschell and Boardman

Mayor Muschell noted that the purpose of this Special City Council Meeting is to review and address concerns, complaints and operations regarding Pinehill Cemetery, with an on-site tour of the grounds.

Also Present: City Manager McNeil, Clerk/Treasurer Kwiatkowski, and Pinehill Cemetery Sexton Ellis Olson

Community members present included Ms. Melody Budzinski, Mr. Henry Morrison, Ms. Janet Gahn, Mr. Keith Barber, Mrs. Debbie Barber, Mrs. Jewell McRae, and Mrs. Joyce Baker

Councilwoman Riddle arrived at 6:35 p.m. Councilman Boardman left the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

The following issues were discussed:

1. Moody Street/Cemetery border – it was decided after much discussion that the City Manager would look into whether Moody Street is part of Pinehill Cemetery operation and provide Council a determination of his findings at the August 14, 2007 City Council meeting. Also discussed during that time were leaves that were in the roadway and against the wall. Mr. Olson noted that those would be picked up during the month of August.
2. Concerns were expressed by Mrs. Jewell McRae regarding a brass flag holder at the Don McRae gravesite. Mr. Olson stated he would look into the matter and get back with Mrs. McRae to determine why the flag pole was removed and if in fact it was done by one of his staff or an act of vandalism.
3. Concerns were expressed by Mrs. Joyce Baker on what she believed to be a sunken gravesite. Mr. Olson talked about the site and stated that this is simply a depression and not a sunken gravesite. Mr. Olson stated he would fill in the area with black dirt. There were also discussions regarding other debris in the Cemetery such as fallen limbs etc. and Mr. Olson explained that May, June and July are typically the grass growing season where it takes all their manpower to keep up with the grass. Normally, late July through August, the grass slows down and does not grow as rapidly and that is when they do the other maintenance items.
4. Council then proceeded to the bridge on the east section of the Cemetery. Council viewed the stones and blocks that were in the drainage area of the creek, and it was decided after discussion with City Manager McNeil and Mayor Muschell, that this area is the City's responsibility and not that of Mr. Olson. It was also noted that much of what was in the creek as far as the large blocks have actually been there for many decades. Councilwoman Lepp noted a pile of leaves that were adjacent to the creek and Mr. Olson explained that his staff had originally put those on the banks of the creek for bank stabilization and someone notified the DNR who came and looked at it and told them they had to be removed. The leaves were removed and there was still some concern that they were still there and Mr. Olson stated that these leaves would also be removed during the month of August.

5. Another issue pertained to graffiti within the Cemetery. Recently there was graffiti discovered on the bridge and also on a small tin shed in the northeast section of the Cemetery. Mr. Olson explained that when it was noticed, he had one of his employees spray paint over it so that issue has been taken care of.
6. Council then proceeded to the Spray and Gahn burial sites. Mr. Olson asked Council to look at the condition of the Spray sites where last year they had been rutted. The ruts have been filled in, the grass has grown over and it is healing quite nicely. There was also discussion by Ms. Janet Gahn as far as her parents obtaining a deed to plots that were bought by their parents and it was noted that she went through a short probate and that the issue was taken care of. Mr. Olson explained that when he became Sexton, there were many problems that were surfacing from prior years. There were 30 plus burials that were not recorded and the City Manager approached him about taking over the Sexton position on behalf of the City. Ms. Gahn at that time brought up the new City Policy regarding retrieval of information for people that come to City Hall for Cemetery records. It was stated by both the City Manager and Clerk/Treasurer that is part of what we do and is a service that the City provides. It was explained to Council that if people come to City Hall and records are readily available, we will not send them elsewhere, if at all possible, we will retrieve them. It was explained that should City staff not be able to retrieve the information because either they cannot find it or their duties prevent them doing so, that it would be turned over to the Clerk/Treasurer and then ultimately, if need be, to Mr. Olson. Mr. Olson stated that he receives numerous requests for Cemetery information. He noted several examples where he has helped people find information on genealogy, gravesites and also accommodated those that have plots in the old part but lose one gravesite because of the difference in the width of the gravesites now that vaults are required. In the old part, the grave width is 36 inches. So for every four gravesites, one is actually lost. In the new part, the width is 40 inches and is not an issue. Mr. Olson explained the various options that people have when it comes to burials in the old part and they lose one burial site.
7. Councilwoman Riddle asked Mr. Olson and Clerk/Treasurer Kwiatkowski what it would take to organize the Cemetery records. It was noted that we would need new software. Clerk/Treasurer Kwiatkowski explained to Council the cost of the software and yearly maintenance for technical support and the initial period of time it would take to enter the records. It would involve a dedicated person and is expected to take nine months or more, and that would be an individual spending pretty much all of their time going through every deed book and entering them in. That being said, that does not mean there still would not be errors or mistakes.
8. Mr. Olson then spoke to Council regarding an accusation that he had been removing headstones from what is referred to as Potter's field. Mr. Olson showed Council a picture of Potter's field and stated that every stone that was there is still there since he began his independent contract with the City as Cemetery Sexton. However, it is not unusual, especially during Halloween, that stones end up missing. He noted that during certain times of the year, he has contacted the City Police and asked them to increase patrols in and around the Cemetery so that vandalism does not take place, especially during the Halloween season.
9. There was discussion as far as responsibility for tree and root removal in the Cemetery. Mr. Olson stated he was responsible for trimming and limbing trees and not for the removal. Many of these trees were planted many years ago by deed holders of various plots and Mr. Olson stated it would be their responsibility to remove them or else the City's.
10. Mrs. Joyce Baker spoke to Council regarding her two infant gravesites on the west block of the Cemetery where she would like to put a headstone in the middle of the area where they are

buried. It was noted however, that would make it difficult as far as Cemetery maintenance is concerned. Mr. Olson reviewed three options that were given to Mrs. Baker when he and Clerk/Treasurer Kwiatkowski met with her in June. The options were to put a double headstone in line with the other headstones in the row; another option was a flush marker so that mowing could occur unhindered; and the third option was to exhume and re-orientate the bodies. Mrs. Baker indicated that she would like the headstone in the middle at the head of the two infants. It was decided that City Manager McNeil would look into this and address the issue with Clerk/Treasurer Kwiatkowski and Mr. Olson, and he would make a determination and inform the City Council of his findings and decision. During this discussion, Mr. Olson noted the cost factor involved and why the Cemetery rules are so strictly enforced which is mainly to reduce the cost of maintenance of the operation.

11. Ms. Melody Budzinski's issues were then addressed. Headstones on a gravesite across the road from the Nau plots have been moved and placed in a different position. Mr. Olson explained that with heavy trucks and sometimes plow blades, the stones were so close to the roadway they had been getting knocked over and Mr. Olson was concerned they would get broken so he moved them. Clerk/Treasurer Kwiatkowski concurred with Mr. Olson. It was noted by Councilman Tebo that complaints should come from the relatives of the people that were affected as far as the movement of the headstones. It was expressed by Councilman Sangster, that if at all possible, if Mr. Olson is going to move a headstone or anything of that nature, he should try to notify the relatives if he is able to reach them. Another issue with Ms. Budzinski and the Nau gravesites had to do with a claim that when people drove through that part of the Cemetery, there was an area where they were actually driving over the Nau gravesites. Mr. Olson stated that he measured out all of the gravesites, showed Council where they begin and end, and when people drive through there, they were in fact not driving over the gravesites.
12. Council next went to the new section of the Cemetery and Mr. Olson noted he has so far moved six bodies that were buried partially in adjacent gravesites. He stated that the previous Sexton marked out the burial sites when he first started as contractor. He noted he has at least an additional six bodies that have to be moved at some point. He also explained that he used pins and staked every gravesite in the new section, staking them every forty inches and is confident of his coordinates that when he buries someone now, the site will be within a quarter inch of where it should be. Mr. Olson again went over examples of problem solving for various individuals and the many requests he receives on a regular basis for information.
13. Mr. Olson then directed Council to the Andrews headstone and mentioned that he told Ms. Bonnie Gouine that he would move the headstone back as directed by Council the first week of July, which has been done.
14. Other items discussed were telephone poles removed either by Consumers Power or the Telephone Company between the sidewalk and the Cemetery on Pinehill Avenue. Mr. Olson noted that it really was not his job to fill those back in but he has already done so. Also, Mr. Olson noted that some hydrant flushing has taken place which has gouged a deep hole just outside the new part of the Cemetery. Mr. Olson commented that he is going to fill in that area. He asked Council to look at the surrounding area in the new section of the Cemetery, commenting that the fields were quite tall and that his staff has made that part of their regular maintenance routine to cut those so the area will always look nice and be manageable in the future. One of the last things he talked about was the planting of trees and how he marks those out for people that want to plant them. He noted that fruit trees, weeping willows, and things of that nature cannot be planted simply due to the root systems and birds soiling the headstones. Mr. Olson stated that he personally goes out and talks to families and explains

what type of trees are allowed and he marks where they can plant by the headstone.

Councilwoman Riddle asked why not forbid the planting of trees. Mr. Olson indicated that he had no problem with it as long as family members put trees where they are marked and plant the type of tree he suggests because what he suggests is a very slow growing tree that grows vertically and not out.

15. Ms. Janet Gahn brought up a question regarding the burial records and how often they are updated. Mr. Olson mentioned there are seven or eight burials that were done this summer that are not recorded yet. Mr. Olson was then asked how someone in the office would find those burial sites for family members. He stated to just simply look it up in the deed books and that is where they would be. He stated that the burial books would be updated in the next week to two weeks.

As the meeting ended, Mr. Olson encouraged people, especially Council, to come out to the Cemetery any time to check it out and let him know if they have any concerns as far as the grounds. He asked Council to feel free to call him at any time with questions or concerns. It was also noted that at City Hall we have all of Mr. Olson's phone numbers including his cell phone which is listed in the City directory.

Adjournment

Councilwoman Lepp moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 p.m. Seconded by Councilman Tebo. Motion carried unanimously.

Mayor James Muschell

City Clerk Kenneth J. Kwiatkowski

Councilman Richard B. Sangster

Councilman Gerald R. Boardman

Councilwoman Winifred L. Riddle

Councilman Charles Charboneau

Councilman Leslie A. Tebo

Councilwoman Theo Lepp