

The Cemetery Commission met at the Mount Vernon City Hall Conference Room on Tuesday, April 8, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. Commissioners present were: Mary Evans, Mike Woods, Eric Siggins, Ruth Horton and Machele Pelkey.

Minutes of the March 11, 2025 meeting were approved.

The following topics were discussed:

*Maintenance of cemetery records and documents* - Mary noted that Joe Jennison continues to work on an Excel document containing cemetery information, but she's unsure of the status of the project.

*Restoration and preservation of cemetery monuments* - Mary reported that the City has approved payment of \$2,210 to John Heider for cemetery preservation and reparation services over a 4 day period. The first day will consist of a morning cemetery preservation training class that will be held in the City Hall Council Chambers. The afternoon session will be held on-site at the cemetery and will provide hands-on experience using the techniques covered in the morning session. The commission has identified 13 gravestones in need of repair and Heider will use the remaining 3 days to rebuild and reset them. The American Legion has agreed to pay for the cost (\$2,250) of repairing 11 Civil War gravestones and the Mount Vernon Masonic Lodge #112 has approved paying (\$525) for gravestone restoration of 2 Masonic gravestones.

Mary indicated that Heider would like to come sometime in June but a specific date(s) hasn't been determined. As soon as dates are known, an article will be written for The Sun, inviting those interested in learning cemetery preservation techniques to attend the free workshop.

*Maintenance of cemetery grounds* - The commission expressed appreciation to City staff for the assistance with grounds projects. The old fence has been removed, the area around the garage has been cleaned up and many leaves and brush have been removed. Commission members have also been working in the cemetery and are collectively responsible for the removal of 8 shrubs, 6 trees and many daylilies. Grounds maintenance will be ongoing.

*Discussion of burial services in Iowa* - Mary reported that she received a request from a community member inquiring about the possibility of green burials. She has also received a request about the possibility of allowing an individual columbarium. Mary met with Jacob Wittrock of Stewart Baxter Funeral and Memorial Services to discuss green burials and columbariums. She shared information about each with the commission. She is going to follow up with Chris Nosbisch regarding the request for an individual columbarium. She indicated that Jacob Wittrock would like to talk with Chris Nosbisch regarding the possibility of constructing a columbarium in the cemetery. The commission requested that they be included in the meeting and Mary agreed that she'll coordinate times/dates with all interested parties.

There was discussion about what Mount Vernon charges for cemetery services. The City website lists the cost for cemetery plots as \$450 for Mount Vernon residents and \$500 for non-residents. Any additional costs, such as grave opening and closing expenses, is unknown. Mary has also asked the City for the approximate number of people that are buried each year and how much space the cemetery has. She has not yet received that information.

*Promoting and publicizing the cemetery* - The commission hopes to provide articles in The Sun to make the public aware of cemetery happenings as well as garner feedback.

Ruth Horton talked about the process of seasonal removal of cemetery arrangements and the uncertainty of knowing when to pull decorations. There's currently a sign at the entrance to the cemetery that lists clean up for Spring as the third week in April. This year, that would be the week of April 14. However, the most recent City newsletter states that all arrangements at the cemetery will need to be removed prior to April 14, 2025, to allow for spring clean-up. Ruth feels that having consistent specific dates would be better. She will report back with her recommendations at the May 13, 2025 meeting.

Mike Woods suggested that a kiosk listing cemetery events and important dates would be helpful.

#### *Old Business*

Jordan Property Management has been awarded the mowing contract for the 2025 calendar year. The City will go out for bid again this Fall with a contract that will span 3-5 years.

There was continued discussion regarding difficulties related to no mapping in the cemetery. Gail Brown has GIS knowledge and it was agreed to invite her to the next meeting on May 13, 2025.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Machele Pelkey