



**Bass Coast Shire Council
Minutes for Special Meeting
Wednesday, 15 April 2020
Town Hall
Bass Coast Civic Centre
Baillieu Street East
Wonthaggi
11.00am**

- 1. These minutes are due to be confirmed on 19 August 2020**
- 2. Any decision included in these minutes is subject to change resulting from a rescission motion passed by Council.**

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Meeting commenced

The meeting commenced at 11.00am

Cr Julian Brown read the acknowledgement.

Statement of Acknowledgement

Bass Coast Shire Council acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first Australians and recognises that they have a unique relationship with the land and water.

Council also recognises that we are situated on the lands of the traditional owners, members of the Kulin Nation who have lived here for thousands of years.

We offer our respect to their elders past and present and through them, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Cr Les Larke read the Councillor Statement.

Councillor Statement

All members of this Council pledge to the Bass Coast Shire community to consider every item listed on this evening's agenda:

- Based on the individual merits of each item;
- Without bias or prejudice by maintaining an open mind; and
- Disregarding Councillors' personal interests so as to avoid any conflict with our public duty.

Any Councillor having a conflict of interest in an item will make a proper, prior disclosure to the meeting and will not participate in the debate or vote on the issue.

A Present and Apologies

Councillors:

- Cr Brett Tessari, Bunurong Ward (Mayor)
- Cr Geoff Ellis, Western Port Ward (Deputy Mayor)
- Cr Bruce Kent, Western Port Ward
- Cr Julian Brown, Bunurong Ward
- Cr Les Larke, Bunurong Ward
- Cr Michael Whelan, Island Ward

Officers in Attendance:

Ms Ali Wastie, Chief Executive Officer

Ms Allison Jones, General Manager Business Transformation

Ms Lee-Anne Harmer, Governance Officer

Apologies:

Cr Clare Le Serve, Western Port Ward

Cr Stephen Fullarton, Island Ward

Cr Pamela Rothfield, Island Ward

B Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

C Public Question Time

There were no Public Questions.

D Petitions, Joint Letters, Deputations and Correspondence

There were no Petitions, Joint Letters, Deputations and Correspondence.

Notices of Motion

E Notices of Motion

There were no Notices of Motion.

Reports Requiring Council Decision

F Reports Requiring Council Decision

F.1 Wonthaggi Cemetery Report

File No: CM20/144
Division: Business Transformation
Council Plan Strategic Objective: Governance

We are responsive, open, transparent
and financially sustainable

Declaration

The author has no direct or indirect interests in relation to this report.

Summary

The Trust are responsible for the governance of the cemetery including the key roles of setting strategic direction, approving the annual budget, monitoring performance, ensuring compliance, developing policy, high level stakeholder management and ensuring that a risk management framework is in place. The Trust delegate day-to-day management of the cemeteries within its control to Council Officers.

The purpose of this report is to;

- Note the Cemetery Operations Update
- Note the Cemetery Master Plan Update
- Note the Cemetery Finance Update

I. Cemetery Operations Update

I.1. Grave Digging

Interments have begun to increase through January and steady to a couple of interments a week through the last couple of months.

Officers received a couple of requests for grave fill to be moved away from the grave at the time of interment for larger funerals. This requires consideration of grave location, environmental conditions and nearby recent burials to these locations.

Officers also assisted with a few requests from families wanting to select their At Need grave locations for pending interments. This requires consideration of grave location requested and is dependent on recent burials nearby. The Grave Digger and Council Officers for a number of operational reasons generally assign At Need graves.

Families have been very appreciative of these additional services and provided positive feedback on Councils services.

Potholes and grave sinkage continues to be monitored and addressed as standard practice. An improvement process of additional monitoring implemented where our Ground Maintenance Contractors also report any grave sinkage when working on site.

Our contractors continue to be efficient with grave requests, plaque installations and the confirmation of new burials, working closely with Funeral Directors and maintaining our cemetery graves and roads.

1.2. Ground Maintenance

Grounds maintenance and general cemetery maintenance is on a strategic scheduled roster, ensuring the grounds are serviced prior to any special holidays. Additional services are engaged as required to address environmental changes throughout the seasons and special projects. Mowing is scheduled to occur every two weeks with garden and grave maintenance scheduled every other week. Council's Parks team also assist with larger tree branches and fallen trees as requested by the Cemeteries Officer.

With the environmental conditions over the past few months, it has been a constant battle addressing fallen trees and branches and teams have reported and managed this well. Officers appreciate community members and visitors to the cemetery who report large fallen trees or branches, there is no capacity to be onsite all the time. Due to resources, reports of smaller branches and twigs can only be addressed on regular maintenance schedules. Officers welcome concerned community members to collect and place any smaller branches by the bins for collection.

Summer and rain exasperates grass weed on mass at the back of the cemetery. This was predicted and scheduled maintenance occurred on these areas in December.

Council and contractors strive to provide high standards and manage community expectations within the financial and physical resourcing constraints of the Trust. Council regularly receives positive feedback for the continuous efforts put into the cemetery grounds and officers acknowledge Connecting Skills Australia for their teams continued efforts in working with Council to deliver. In recent months, officers have undertaken an audit of the type and volume of requests that have been received. The audit shows that over the last 12 months approximately 449 emails have been received in relation to minor ground maintenance issues such as twigs and bark on the lawn, weeding, deteriorating signage, broken adornments and historical graves. Due to resource constraints, a standard response will be provided to those community members explaining Council's inability to respond to each of these issues. The figure of 449 emails excludes emails received from Right of Interment Holders or relatives requiring assistance with historical graves. Officers will prepare a briefing to Councillors in May.

1.3. Wonthaggi Cemetery - Tombstones

ABC Radio Network journalist Lyn Gallacher contacted officers in January to provide positive feedback on the presentation of the Wonthaggi Cemetery and to seek general information on cemetery operations, fees and issues faced for the Tombstones program series. The Tombstone series was created by Lyn to get people thinking about cemeteries, inform and highlight operations and restrictions. Thank you Cr Rothfield who stepped in for the interview and to Lyn for her interest in cemeteries and assisting to promote community interest.

Tombstones radio program

I.4. Monumental graves maintenance

Graves maintenance by legislation is the responsibility of Right of Interment holders not the Cemetery Trust. Limited maintenance is allowable under legislation for cemetery operations, however this is subject to approval, funding, capacity and priorities. Denomination areas are included in scheduled maintenance throughout the year to address weed maintenance and are also highlighted in the cemetery master plan to plant out in future years to address weed management. Due to the local environment, there is a lot of wind that causes tree branches, twigs and leaves to fall on the graves and officers welcome concerned community members assistance in removing fallen debris off any graves and pile near our bins for removal. Due to the size of the cemetery, limited contractor hours and other operational requirements, this is not something officers can address on a regular or weekly basis.

A program of weed spraying and removal of weeds and trees from historical graves occurred in December. This work was completed as part of our scheduled cemetery grounds weed management.

I.5. Cemetery Training

DHHS Governance and Operations Training for Cemetery Trusts

- Cr Rothfield attended in November 2019
- Cemeteries Officer attended in February 2020

It was great to refresh and reinforce that Council is performing in line with cemeteries legislation and leaders in our management of cemeteries. Correspondence was also received from the training provider, expressing appreciation of officers sharing knowledge, expertise, solutions and advice with other Gippsland Cemetery Trust members.

I.6. Cemetery Officer Support

Officers received the following recognition for sharing knowledge and learnings with peers to benefit communities.

I.6.1. Mildura Rural City Council

DHHS sought officers assistance in February and requested if we would be able to provide advice and support to Mildura Rural City Council. Mildura are very similar to Bass Coast in that they have two cemeteries that are Council managed and DHHS felt that Council could be of assistance with the direction and knowledge of how to effectively manage cemeteries. It has been beneficial to discuss different solutions and innovations of Council managed cemeteries and officers are now looking to expand this conversation with other Council managed cemeteries.

I.6.2. Grantville Cemetery Trust

Grantville Cemetery Trust contacted officers in February to ask advice and expertise on planning, policies, graves and plaques. They were very grateful to receive support and advice and beneficial to share our knowledge and innovations with other local cemeteries and support volunteer community trusts.

2. Cemetery Master Plan Update

The Wonthaggi Master Plan sets the strategic direction of the cemetery.

Council/Cemetery Trust have been successful in obtaining a Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) \$25,000 grant to perform a detailed Infrastructure Development Strategy and contribute toward a new granite niche wall.

2.1. Infrastructure Development Strategy

Beveridge Williams have been engaged to develop the Infrastructure Development Strategy including;

- Desktop investigation of existing services and site
- Review of Proposed Drainage Strategy in conjunction with Stormy Solutions
- Review and adjustment of works program to estimate timeframe and cost of works yet to be completed and work required for upcoming program
- Review of Master Plan Report and Map and preparation of supplementary document to provide details of required adjustments or amendments

This strategy will allow us to plan for future development and grants. This work is currently underway and expected to be completed in coming months an updated action plan and status update of master plan recommendations will be provided at the next Trust meeting.

2.2. Granite Niche Wall

Recommendation Eight of the Wonthaggi Master Plan is a solid granite niche wall to provide a more sustainable outcome for the community than the current brick niche walls. Consultation and advice was sought from Traralgon Cemetery Trust and quotes received from two local monumental masons. Keenan & Sons Monumental Masons have been engaged to supply and install a new granite niche wall that will be placed in line with the three brick niche walls that are nearing capacity.

An engineering report identified the current vacant cement slab was not suited for a granite niche wall. After consultation with two local builders, a decision to remove the current cement slab and replace with a stabilized cement slab was more cost effective than having to stabilize the current slab.

Work is currently underway and expected to be completed in coming weeks. The new niche wall will hold the entire cremated remains of one person. One side will have 35 interment locations with the other side allowing 24 interment locations to enable a larger plaque for combined interments.

3. Cemetery Finance Update

Attachment AT-1 - Wonthaggi Cemetery Abstract of Accounts July – December 2019.

Please note that no interest revenue or profit transfers to perpetual maintenance are addressed in this half-yearly abstract. This will be shown in the end of financial year Abstract of Accounts due at the next Cemetery Trust meeting.

- Interments are now trending towards that of last financial year, with bodily interments still more popular than interring cremated remains. Although we have a few families, awaiting interment of cremated remains into the new granite niche wall.

- Right of Interment reservations remain down compared to last year.
- Memorial permits and plaques for unmarked graves increasing.
- Grant monies received will not show in this abstract as it was not received until late January.

As the end of the financial year approaches officers are currently reviewing cemetery fee structures as requested by DHHS. DHHS will automatically apply the CPI increase of 2% to all fees unless otherwise instructed by individual Trusts. Our fees were extensively reviewed and approved by DHHS for gradual increases over a three year period in 2019. Fees will remain on this strategic direction with additional fees introduced to recover costs on services performed that aren't currently captured in our fee structure ie: removal of cremated remains from place of interment.

Recommendation

That Council:

- 1. Notes the Cemetery Operations Update**
- 2. Notes the Cemetery Master Plan Update**
- 3. Notes the Cemetery Finance Update**

Attachments

AT-1 Wonthaggi Cemetery Abstract of Accounts July - December 2019 | Page

Cr Michael Whelan joined the meeting at 11.07am

Decision

Moved: Cr. Geoff Ellis / Seconded: Cr. Bruce Kent

That the recommendation be adopted.

CARRIED

F.2 San Remo Cemetery Report

File No: CM20/154
Division: Business Transformation
Council Plan Strategic Objective: Governance

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and financially sustainable

Declaration

The author has no direct or indirect interests in relation to this report.

Summary

The Trusts are responsible for the governance of the cemeteries including the key roles of setting strategic direction, approving the annual budget, monitoring performance, ensuring compliance, developing policy, high level stakeholder management and ensuring that a risk management framework is in place. The Trust delegate day-to-day management of the cemeteries within its control to Council Officers.

The purpose of this report is to;

- Note the Cemetery Operations Update
- Note the Cemetery Master Plan Update
- Note the Cemetery Finance Update

I. Cemetery Operations Update**I.1. Grave Digging**

Interments remain low at San Remo Cemetery, with an increase of monument installations and inspections. This is due to some monument installations occurring up to a year after initial interment.

Grave sinkage and pothole maintenance monitored and addressed as standard practice. An improvement process of additional monitoring implemented where our Ground Maintenance Contractors also report any grave sinkage when working on site.

I.2. Ground Maintenance

Grounds maintenance and general cemetery maintenance is on a strategic scheduled roster, ensuring the grounds are serviced prior to any special holidays. Additional services are engaged as required to address environmental changes throughout the seasons and special projects. Mowing is scheduled to occur once a month with garden and grave maintenance also scheduled once a month but on a different week so that there is presence at the cemetery twice a month. Council's Parks team also assist with larger tree branches and fallen trees as requested by the Cemeteries Officer and the delivery of mulch when required.

Summer and rain exasperates grass weed on mass at the lower part of the cemetery grounds. Regular scheduled maintenance now manages this area, saving the additional cost of slashing.

Garden beds required a lot of attention to manage weeds over the summer period. Spraying and mulching to suppress weeds is continuing. Work continues on addressing the scrub under the trees aligning the front of the cemetery as identified in the San Remo Cemetery Master Plan.

Council regularly receives positive feedback for the continuous efforts put into the cemetery grounds and officers acknowledge and thank Connecting Skills Australia and Friends of San Remo Cemetery for their continued efforts in working with Council to deliver.

1.3. Community Support

There is limited requirement for grave contractors and officers to be on site at San Remo Cemetery. Officers rely on the San Remo community to monitor and report trees down or maintenance required as they visit or walking through the cemetery.

2. Cemetery Master Plan Update

The San Remo Master Plan sets the strategic direction of the cemetery.

Friends of San Remo Cemetery arranged for the spreading of the mound at the rear of the cemetery in March. Officers acknowledge Russell Riseley and Alan Sproull for donating time and equipment to this project.

Development of an Infrastructure Development Strategy for the San Remo Master Plan is required for strategic planning of future development, grants and review of works completed to date. A DHHS grant will be submitted in November 2020.

Review and staging of operational/administration recommendations presented in the Master Plan is required prior to further work being scheduled. Officers have no capacity for this work until projects have been completed at Wonthaggi Cemetery.

3. Cemetery Finance Update

Attachment AT-I – San Remo Cemetery Abstract of Accounts July – December 2019.

Please note that no interest revenue or profit transfers to perpetual maintenance are addressed in this half-yearly abstract. This will be shown in the end of financial year Abstract of Accounts due at the next Cemetery Trust meeting.

- Interments remain low at San Remo with a trend towards cremation rather than bodily interments.
- Right of Interment enquiries increased with reservations pending at the time of this report.
- Monument permits increased.

As the end of the financial year approaches officers are currently reviewing cemetery fee structures as requested by DHHS. DHHS will automatically apply the CPI increase of 2% to all fees unless otherwise instructed by individual Trusts. Our fees were extensively reviewed and approved by DHHS for gradual increases over a three year period in 2019. Fees will remain on this strategic direction with additional fees introduced to recover costs on services performed that aren't currently captured in our fee structure ie: removal of cremated remains from place of interment.

Recommendation

That Council:

- 1. Notes the Cemetery Operations Update**
- 2. Notes the Cemetery Master Plan Update**
- 3. Notes the Cemetery Finance Update**

Attachments

AT-1 San Remo Cemetery Abstract of Accounts July - December 2019 | Page

Decision

Moved: Cr. Geoff Ellis / Seconded: Cr. Julian Brown

That the recommendation be adopted.

CARRIED

F.3 Wonthaggi and San Remo Cemeteries Business Continuity Plan

File No: CM20/176
Division: Business Transformation
Council Plan Strategic Objective: Governance

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Declaration

The author has no direct or indirect interests in relation to this report.

Summary

The Trusts are responsible for the governance of the cemeteries including the key roles of setting strategic direction, approving the annual budget, monitoring performance, ensuring compliance, developing policy, high level stakeholder management and ensuring that a risk management framework is in place. The Trusts delegate day-to-day management of the cemeteries within its control to Council Officers.

The purpose of this report is to;

- Present the Council Cemeteries Business Continuity Plan Report
- Note Council Officers are reviewing the current Business Continuity Plan
- Recommend to pause the sale of Right of Interment and grave selection for Wonthaggi Cemetery
- Recommend to pause the sale of Right of Interment and grave selection for San Remo Cemetery

Cemetery Administration Update**1. Business Continuity Plan (BCP)**

Cemeteries and Crematoria Association of Victoria (CCAV) recently provided all cemeteries with a Pandemic Disaster Plan template and encouraged all cemeteries to develop a plan.

Council has a Business Continuity Plan which includes Cemeteries.

Council Officers are currently reviewing the existing plan and taking into consideration the information contained within the CCAV Pandemic Disaster Plan template.

2. Right of Interment

In order to monitor and control supply and demand Council Cemetery Trusts will be required to make changes to current practices and services.

- 2.1. Pause the sale of Right of Interment grave reservations.
- 2.2. Pause the option for families to select a grave location. Graves will be assigned by the Grave Digger after assessment of ground conditions and operational requirements.

Trust Administration will continue to monitor the Covid-19 pandemic specifically supply and demand of grave capacity at Wonthaggi Cemetery and San Remo Cemetery. If additional graves are required, GPS location mapping will be performed in new areas of the cemeteries as per the adopted master plans. This will allow immediate interments to occur with lawn beams to be installed once the pandemic has passed.

Right of Interment holders of unoccupied reserved graves may be contacted to request release of their current grave allocation. Their reservation will remain unallocated with the option to choose a new allocated location being made available when the pandemic has passed and new graves have been made available.

The pause will be in effect for the duration of the pandemic or until it is deemed unnecessary for cemetery operations by Council Officers.

Recommendation

That Council:

- 1. Note Council Officers are reviewing the current Business Continuity Plan**
- 2. Adopt the following Right of Interment pause recommendations for Wonthaggi Cemetery Trust**
 - 2.1. Pause the sale of Right of Interment grave reservations.**
 - 2.2. Pause the option for families to select a grave location.**
 - 2.3. Authorise Council Officers to determine when Right of Interment sales are to resume**
- 3. Adopt the following Right of Interment pause recommendations for San Remo Cemetery Trust**
 - 3.1. Pause the sale of Right of Interment grave reservations.**
 - 3.2. Pause the option for families to select a grave location.**
 - 3.3. Authorise Council Officers to determine when Right of Interment sales are to resume**

Attachments

There are no attachments for this report

Decision

Moved: Cr. Les Larke / Seconded: Cr. Bruce Kent

That Council:

- 1. Note Council Officers are reviewing the current Business Continuity Plan**
- 2. Adopt the following Right of Interment pause recommendations for Wonthaggi Cemetery Trust**
 - 2.1. Pause the sale of Right of Interment grave reservations.**
 - 2.2. Authorise Councils CEO to determine when Right of Interment sales are to resume**
- 3. Adopt the following Right of Interment pause recommendations for San Remo Cemetery Trust**
 - 3.1. Pause the sale of Right of Interment grave reservations.**
 - 3.2. Authorise Councils CEO to determine when Right of Interment sales are to resume**

CARRIED

G Urgent Business

There were no Urgent Business items.

Mayoral Announcement of Next Meeting of Council

Council is monitoring and implementing the COVID-19 pandemic response and restrictions set out by the State and Federal Governments.

Council will be pausing Community Connection Sessions for the coming months.

The next Ordinary Council Meeting will be held on 15 April 2020 in the Civic Centre, Town Hall commencing at 11.30am.

The following Ordinary Council Meeting will be held on 20 May 2020 in the Civic Centre, Council Chamber commencing at 5.00pm.

Meeting closed

The meeting closed at 11.17am