

Proceedings of a called workshop meeting of the City Commission of the City of Palatka, Florida, held on the 22nd day of May, 2003.

PRESENT:	Mayor	Karl N. Flagg
	Commissioner	Mary Lawson Brown
	Commissioner	Hernan Azula
	Commissioner	James Norwood, Jr.
	Commissioner	George E. Sanders

Also Present: City Manager Allen R. Bush, City Attorney Donald E. Holmes, Acting Clerk Cathy Nagengast, Police Chief Gary Getchell, Fire Chief Kenneth Venables, Planning Director Adam Mengel, Cemetery Supervisor Larry Hartman, WTP Supt. Mike Felton, WWTP Supt. Platt Drew, Sanitation & Streets Supt. Bernard Williams, W & S Supt. Rhett McCamey, Parks Supt. Jeff Norton, Golf Pro Tom Kukitz,

Mayor Flagg called the workshop to order and read the following call:

May 20, 2003

TO MESSRS: MARY LAWSON BROWN, HERNAN AZULA,
JAMES NORWOOD AND GEORGE SANDERS:

You are hereby notified that a special workshop meeting of the City Commission is called to be held at the regular meeting place of the City Commission at City Hall, 201 N. 2nd Street, in the City of Palatka at 5:00 p.m., Thursday, May 22, 2003.

The purpose of the meeting is to review the Cemetery Ordinances and Rules, and hear public comment on same.

/s/ Karl N. Flagg
Karl N. Flagg, MAYOR

We acknowledge receipt of a copy of the foregoing notice of a special meeting this 22nd day of May, 2003.

/s/ Mary Lawson Brown
COMMISSIONER

/s/ James Norwood
COMMISSIONER

/s/ George E. Sanders
COMMISSIONER

/s/ Hernan Azula
COMMISSIONER

Mayor Flagg welcomed the audience members and city staff, and stated the rules for public comment, saying they will take the current rules one at a time and hold discussion.

1. All corners, coping, slabs for grave lots shall be marble or granite and shall be installed at ground level.

Per the question, Cemetery Supt. Larry Hartman said there are no other materials used for corners, coping or slabs. This is to prohibit people from coming in and pouring concrete. This makes for uniform gravesites. Mayor Flagg said they specify 'ground level' due to maintenance issues, but it does not need to be directly at ground level but slightly higher, in order to allow water to run off. Mr. Hartman said the complaints come about when slabs sink to lower than ground level. Slab companies should be called back out to level them up when that happens. Mayor Flagg said monument companies will automatically have to make two trips if slabs are installed at ground level, because they will sink. Per discussion, it was determined that the time lapse between interment and installation of the slab is the problem, and there should be a time set for the ground to settle before the slab goes in. Commissioner Brown said people need to know the City is not responsible for re-setting slabs and monuments.

Lillian Messom, 2825 Lundy Road, said when her slab was installed it was below ground level from the beginning. She tried for three years to get someone to talk about bringing

it above ground level. Watts was willing to do it. The slab was put on within a year from interment. Mr. Bush asked Mr. Hartman what his objection is to bringing the slab to ground level. Mr. Hartman said he has no objection to that. If slabs are more than 1 inch above ground level, the mowers hit them. If they are put in too soon after interment, they tend to sink. Mrs. Messom said she tried speaking to Mr. Hartman about bringing it up to ground level and got nowhere with him. She couldn't get that OK'd. Commissioner Brown said all the monument company has to do is obtain a permit to do it and they can raise it. That policy has been in place for many years, and all the local monument companies are aware of the City's policies. Mrs. Messom said none of this was explained to them. Commissioner Brown said most times people are upset when picking out plots. It is hard to communicate anything, and many times people don't ask. They should give folks a brochure when they buy their plots. Mrs. Messom said no one gave them any rules when they bought their plots. Mayor Flagg said at this time they are only dealing with the substance of the rules, and not whether or not she was informed of rules when she bought her plots. Those issues have been dealt with. Mr. Hartman said many people want their slabs set right away, but the ground needs time to settle. Mayor Flagg said it is the city's responsibility to set rules to see that the slabs are not installed too soon, and asked Mr. Hartman to come back with a recommended 'settling' time between interment and allowing a slab to be set. Mr. Hartman said that depends on variables such as amount of rainfall. Commissioner Azula said the City is not selling monuments and setting slabs; that is the monument company's responsibility, and they simply need to follow the rules and make their own determination as to whether or not the ground is settled before installing the slab. Mayor Flagg said Mr. Hartman is the one dealing with the family and the City needs to be proactive. Commissioner Sanders said if the monument companies know what the policy is they will follow it. Per the question, Mr. Hartman said the family is responsible for contacting the monument company to advise them the slab or monument needs attention. They own the plot and monuments. Commissioner Brown said sometimes families prefer the funeral directors or someone else take care of that.

2. No stones, gravel, pebbles or other materials shall be used as grave coverings.

Mayor Flagg said Section 22-3 of the Code makes reference to 'light material' and asked what that refers to. Mr. Hartman said if you are trying to use a weedeater around gravel, it picks it up and throws it around. Mr. Bush said it could also refer to mulch. Mayor Flagg said if it is in the ordinance, it should be in the rules. Commissioner Sanders asked that we spell out what the City considers 'light material.'

3. All vehicles, including vault and monument trucks, are limited to the roadway only.

Mayor Flagg said again the rules need to be the same as the ordinance, and they should match. Mr. Hartman said every time he meets with a family he gives them a copy of the rules. He did have a problem with vehicles being driven across graves, especially vault trucks, but since this rule went into effect, he does not. Every now and then it happens, but he takes care of it.

4. Permits for the installation of markers must be obtained before markers can be set.

Per the question, Mr. Hartman said when the monument company notifies him that they want to set a monument, he marks off the space and centers it up so it looks uniform. There is no cost associated with this. Per the question, the funeral home usually has someone set the veteran's stones, and they usually call him to get the permit. Per the question, he does not prefer to set the VA stones; some are much too big and heavy. Mayor Flagg said if they don't give them a piece of paper, they need to change the word to 'permission'. Mr. Hartman said he can give them a paper permit, but to make it easier for the monument companies, many times he just does it over the phone. Commissioner Brown said she will help him develop a permit form that they sign off on.

5. Vaults and monuments may only be delivered and installed in the cemetery during regular business hours.

Per discussion, it should be specified that only concrete & steel vaults are allowed.

6. Benches are permitted in Oakhill West Cemetery in place of headstones only.

Mr. Hartman said when this cemetery was set up they decided not to allow benches because of the lack of space for driving, but they amended it last year. When you deliver a vault, you would have to take up all the benches to get through there. Mr. Bush said the rule should state that they have to purchase the plot next to their plot and set the bench in place of the headstone, in line with the other headstones. Mayor Flagg asked what the status is for benches in the other cemeteries. They need to revise the sentence to note whether this is an exception, because it reads like they are only permitted in Oakhill West. Mr. Hartman said benches are permitted in Oakhill, but they can place benches at the foot of the grave.

Lillian Messom asked them to explain to her exactly what type of bench is allowed. Mayor Flagg told her Marble or Granite. It should be so stated in the rules. Per the question, Mr. Bush said she can place a bench beside her daughter's headstone in the plot she owns. If another headstone goes on that plot, they can move it to the next plot, and so on. They discussed this with her when they met with her at the gravesite. She owns eight plots (two rows of four), and it can be placed on any of those eight plots as long as it is in place of the headstone and in line with the other headstones. If she puts it on the second row, it needs to be in line with the other headstones. Mayor Flagg said this does not apply to Oakhill; they can put a bench at the foot of the grave. Westview is just about full; there are still some pre-purchased graves that are empty.

7. All flowers, ornaments or other decorations shall be placed in the headstone area only. Nothing shall be hung or placed in any tree or shrub in any cemetery.

Lillian Messom, 2825 Lundy Road, said she just cannot understand why they have this rule for the cemeteries, but downtown during holidays the trees are decorated. She spoke to someone at city hall and was told the trees belong to the citizens, meaning they were not allowed to damage the trees. She is a citizen too. She does not remember whom she spoke with. Mr. Bush said various other families with people buried there objected to having all the various types of ornaments hung in the trees. Mrs. Messom asked who these people are that object; they are not here. She does not understand why they object. They put objects in the trees because they love someone. Mayor Flagg said they are not going to get into specifics; the tree belongs to the City. It is not on the lot they purchased. It is within a public cemetery, which addresses the needs of the public as a whole. City Hall technically belongs to the citizens, but they have to lock it up at night. They have a responsibility to protect these assets. It is unfortunate that all this came after the fact; had her family known this was not allowed, they would probably have found another way to grieve. People decorate trees at Christmas and this is an acceptable standard. The trees at the cemetery are not her or anyone else's property to decorate.

Allegra Kitchens, 1027 S. 12th Street, said she has family members buried in Westview and Oakhill, and she supports this rule. She recognizes that everyone grieves differently, but she doesn't like it and she thinks the ornaments should be kept from the trees.

Cassandra Bordinger, 145 E. Grandview, E. Palatka, said in reference to flowers being allowed only at the headstone, that her daughters and sons don't just put flowers at the headstone. They put them at the end of the plot, also, because they know where their father is buried, and their plot is mowed and taken care of. She sees no harm in her kids placing their flowers anywhere they want to on that plot. She owns two spaces. She knows the boundaries because they are marked out. Her husband's grave is low. You can tell who takes care of their gravesites. She could see it if they weren't taking care of their plots. Those flowers aren't in anyone's way.

Terry Gaultney, 614 Fern Street, Palatka, said when Mayor Flagg and Mr. Bush met with her mother-in-law, Mrs. Messom, they promised to have her plot marked so she could have the marble markers made for the corners. It has never been marked. Mayor Flagg

said that is the monument company's responsibility; they need to call Mr. Hartman to get the markers and permit.

Commissioner Brown said in addition to giving people copies of the regulations when they purchase the plot, they should also include a set of rules with their deed when it is mailed to them, to be certain they have them. Most families don't remember what you tell them when they are picking out plots, especially when they are traumatized. Mr. Bush said there is not a prohibition against hanging items; they can hang them on stakes and garden poles by the headstone; but they can't hang them in shrubs, bushes or trees.

There being no further business to discuss, the workshop was adjourned at 5:55 p.m. upon a motion by Commissioner Brown, seconded by Commissioner Norwood.

CITY CLERK

MAYOR