

December 13, 2016

TO: Oak Lawn and Sand Hill Cemeteries Lot Owners and Families of Lot Owners

FROM: City of Decatur Cemetery Board of Directors – Ann Logue, President; Wayne Stone, Vice-President; Joyce Horton, Secretary; and Board Members: Gene Blagg, Cynthia DesRoches, Frank Perrin, Angela Smith, Billy Wiley, LaDonna Wren, Ann Williams

Interest earned from the endowment fund is one of two main sources of income for both cemeteries, however, the very low interest rates have greatly reduced this source of income. Although the endowment fund had \$424,644.60 in it at the beginning of the past fiscal year, because of the very low interest rates now being paid, only \$524.70 endowment interest was earned this past fiscal year. Because of this great decrease in endowment interest income, we ask that you please consider making a contribution to one of the categories specified on the donation form enclosed. If you have already endowed your family lot and would like to make an additional donation to increase the endowment fund, mark category 1 on the donation form enclosed. Your name will be listed with other donors in the 2017 report. \$1,335.00 was donated in 2016 to the endowment fund, and their names are listed on the “Donors” page in this report.

Special contributions not designated for endowments are earmarked as “Special Project” donations and will be used for capital improvements or special projects decided on by the Cemetery Board. Because cemetery expenses have been exceeding its income, Special Project donations allow the Board to do projects it could not do otherwise. \$14,960.98 was received this past fiscal year from special donations. A special thanks to those who made donations to the Cemetery in 2016 and whose names are listed on the “Donors” page in this report.

One special project completed this year was the placement of ten additional street signs in Oak Lawn at a cost of \$1,321.50. Another project completed this past year included repairing 256 monuments (by lifting and straightening them or repairing broken ones) in blocks 6 and 13 in Oak Lawn at a cost of \$7,600.00. The Board plans to repair broken or leaning monuments in additional older sections in Oak Lawn in the upcoming year. The Board also plans to begin clearing new sections on the north end of Oak Lawn this winter.

With the increased trend toward cremations, the Board is discussing if there is a need to build a columbarium in Oak Lawn for the placement of urns containing cremated remains. Another option discussed is the designation of an area in the cemetery reserved exclusively for the burial of urns in small, individual plots. Current rules pertaining to the burial of cremains state that (1) only two sets of cremains will be allowed to be buried in one grave space, and (2) only one set of cremains can be buried in the same grave space with one other burial.

Remember that the pavilion on the east side of Oak Lawn, which has fourteen benches for seating, is now available to be used for grave side ceremonies. The Board encourages you to use this pavilion, believing it will be safer to use than holding services at the actual grave site. Having ceremonies at the actual grave site involves people having to walk over curbs, ant and gopher mounds, and uneven ground, and these obstacles increase the chances of someone falling.

We ask that all visits to the cemeteries be limited to the hours of dawn to dusk. To show respect for all who are buried in the cemetery and their loved ones who visit, we ask that a quiet and respectful conduct be observed in the cemetery. In order to maintain contact information for lots in our cemeteries, we ask for your assistance by sending us the names and addresses of any of your adult children, siblings, or other family members who currently are not on our mailing list.

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR 10/1/15 - 9/30/16

ENDOWMENT FUND BALANCE:

Endowment Funds (includes \$5,829.00 new endowment deposits/donations) \$430,998.30

INCOME/EXPENSE STATEMENT:

Total Income Deposited into General Fund \$ 19,353.00

Total Interest Income Earned on Endowment Funds \$ 524.70

Total Disbursements out of General Fund (operating expenses) (77,603.65)

Total Income Special Projects Fund (donations + interest) \$ 15,113.90

Total Disbursements out of Special Projects Fund (8,921.50)

DECATUR CEMETERY BOARD 2016 SUMMARY REPORT

Both Oak Lawn Cemetery and Sand Hill Cemetery are part of a single municipal cemetery system operated by the City of Decatur. The Board is appointed annually by the Decatur City Council and is under City supervision. Its financial operations are managed by the City. The Board meets bimonthly, in the odd-numbered months, on the second Monday, at the City Hall at 10:00 a.m. Meetings are open to all lot owners.

SALE OF GRAVE SPACES - The current price of \$500.00 for each grave space is the same for both cemeteries. This includes a perpetual care fee to provide upkeep of the space. However, **the price will increase to \$600.00 per space on March 1, 2017.** Lots can be purchased from Joyce Horton or Chet Niblett. The phone number for Decatur Cemetery Board is 940-627-3980.

MAINTENANCE/UPKEEP FEES - Because of the great decrease in income from endowment interest, it is very important that each family who has a lot in Oak Lawn or Sand Hill makes sure their family lot is being taken care of by either paying yearly dues or by paying the required amount to provide perpetual care for the lot.

(1) For all lot owners who purchased lots prior to 1984 and who have not endowed their lot, annual dues are required for upkeep of lots. The \$10.00 minimum, payable in January of each year, will provide upkeep for up to five grave spaces with \$2.00 added for each additional space.

(2) Lot owners who purchased lots prior to 1984 may choose to endow their lots instead of paying annual upkeep dues. The \$125.00 minimum will provide upkeep for up to five grave spaces with \$25.00 added for each additional space. The money is placed in a perpetual care fund, known as the endowment fund. Only the interest earned from the endowment fund can be used for general operating expenses. Endowments deposited into the endowment fund cannot be used.

NEW REGULATIONS - Because of the challenges presented in keeping a cemetery the size of Oak Lawn maintained, **special regulations were adopted in 2010 to improve the efficiency in maintaining both cemeteries.** Whereas in the past the Cemetery Board has been more lenient concerning enforcement of rules and guidelines in place, it has become necessary to begin enforcing all Rules and Regulations. Trees, shrubs, benches, toys, fencing, statues, glass/ceramic items, excessive flower arrangements, and other items interfere with the mowing, with some of these items posing a potential safety hazard for the mowing crew and visitors to the cemetery. All deeds state that ownership of a lot is subject to all rules in place at the time of purchase and also subject to all rules which the Board puts into place at a later date.

Important Notices listing some of the main rules were published in the Wise County Messenger in 2016 in both English and Spanish. The Board is in the process of making signs listing some of the rules in both English and Spanish. The signs will soon be erected at cemetery entrances. **A complete list of the rules**, as well as other cemetery information, **can be viewed on the “decaturtx.org” website** by typing “Cemetery” in the search box on the website’s home page. You can also contact the secretary to request a copy of the rules.

Remember that **no curbs** are allowed in the new sections opened in Oak Lawn, these being blocks 35 – 41. **No additional curbs** are allowed in Sand Hill. Only corner lot markers are allowed in the sections where curbs are prohibited. Headstones, footstones, and corner lot markers in all sections of both cemeteries must be made of granite, marble, or bronze metal and set at ground level.

MEMORIAL FUND - A memorial fund was established by the Board for those wishing to contribute to the memory of a friend or loved one. A card will be sent to the family informing them of the memorial gift. The names of those who made memorial donations in 2016 are listed with other donors in this report.

2016 CEMETERY OPERATION – Both Oak Lawn and Sand Hill Cemeteries are maintained by private mowing firms. In the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, Oak Lawn was mowed and trimmed numerous times at a total cost of \$51,585.84 and Sand Hill was mowed five times at a total cost of \$1,875.00. We appreciate the assistance provided by the City’s crews who worked at Oak Lawn throughout the year providing routine services including trimming trees and shrubs, removing trash, repairing roads and water leaks, and adding dirt to graves needing maintenance.

Besides mowing expenses, other cemetery expenses include insurance and taxes on cemetery property, purchase of dirt to fill in graves (\$1,110.00 for six loads), rental of portable restrooms at Oak Lawn (\$98.66 per 28-day rental), providing water at Oak Lawn for those needing to water flowers/trees, monthly telephone bill for cemetery office and other office expenses, and upkeep on the secretary’s house/office owned by the Cemetery Board.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

For All Lot Owners and Their Family Members Regarding Items Placed on Lots

Rules and Regulations adopted in 2010 and in prior years by the City of Decatur Cemetery Board to provide guidelines for maintenance, efficiency, and enhancement of the grounds, include:

- (1) All faded, wilted or unsightly flowers will be removed and disposed of by the grounds keeper.
- (2) No permanent planting of trees, hedges, shrubs, or flowers are allowed in any part of the cemetery.
- (3) No white rock, gravel, decorative rock, cement slabs, or any other type of covering shall be placed on any grave or lot.
- (4) The placement of any decorative items such as benches, seats, lights, chimes, toys, carpet, etc. that impede or prevent the mowing or maintenance of the cemetery is prohibited. Grounds keepers may remove any items that are considered a safety hazard.
- (5) To assist in mowing season only one flower arrangement may be used on each grave.
- (6) Prior to setting any markers or monuments or installing curbs or corner markers, approval must be secured from the Cemetery Board Secretary or Grounds Chairman so they may mark the boundaries of the affected lot and insure the contractor complies with all regulations pertaining to curbing, corner markers, and monuments.

Pertaining to benches in (4) above, the Board agreed that all benches placed before October 11, 2010, could remain, but any benches placed on lots after that date are in violation of the Rules and Regulations and need to be removed (a copy of the Rules and Regulations has been attached to all Deeds issued since October, 2010.)

If it is determined that your lot is in violation of one or more of the above Rules, these items can be removed by a designated City crew. Please remove any items from your lot which are in violation of the above listed Rules and which you do not wish to be disposed of by the City.

Signs will soon be placed at cemetery entrances listing some of the Rules and Regulations. A complete list can be viewed on the City of Decatur's website decaturnt.org by typing "cemetery" in the search box.

COMMENT/DONATION FORM

TO: City of Decatur Cemetery Board

FROM:

(Name)

(Address)

(A) If a donation is enclosed, please use it for (check one or more):

1. Endowment Fund
2. Special Projects
3. To be used as needed

Memorial - If your gift is intended to honor or memorialize someone, please give that person's name:

and name and address of the person to be notified of your memorial:

(B) Comments - Please include any suggestions for improvement.
