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Re: Creekside Memorial Park Cemetery

Early in February of 2013, I was contacted by Bill and Holly Newman requesting I review the letter; which was written by them, to Contra Costa County in April 2010. For over 34 years, I have been a member of the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association (ICCF). I am licensed by the Department of Consumer Affairs, State of California as a Cemetery Manager, Cemetery Broker, and a Subject Matter Expert since 1994.

Upon review of the April 2010 letter, I found several inaccurate statements, perhaps because issues such as cremation statistics have changed dramatically within the past few years. As an example; the cremation rate in the United States has been increasing steadily with the National average rate rising from 3.56% in 1960 to 40.62% in 2010 and projections from the cremation association of North America forecasting a rate of 44.42% in 2015 and 55.65% in 2025. Even these forecasted projections are behind current statistics. Presently, Deer Creek Funeral Home in Dublin reports 80% of their business is cremation while their Walnut Creek Funeral Facility is at 95%. Graham Hitch Pleasanton reports 60-65% of their business is cremation. Jess C. Spencer, Castro Valley, reports the same numbers and stated that cremations are rising at the rate of 1% per year.

Economic factors strongly affect the decision to cremate or not. With mandated cutbacks, those who have a choice choose the inexpensive cremation over traditional burial. Add to this the increasing Asian population preferring cremation and the necessary amount of land space needed for the inurnments becomes much less than traditional burials. Japan has one of the highest cremation rates in the world with the country reporting a cremation rate of 99.85% in 2008.

In the April 2010 memo, several local pioneer and district cemeteries indicated burial space was non-existent to minimal. There was no mention of the Catholic Cemeteries that now allow non-Catholic burials. This adds thousands of potential burial spaces to the Tri-Valley area. Also, Lone Tree Cemetery in Hayward was overstated regarding burial rate. The 495 per year is really closer to 275 cases, (YTD 2012). The capacity is understated as current projection utilizing both traditional casketed burial, mausoleum entombment, and cremation spaces, indicate another 125-130 years of burials. Lone Tree Cemetery is within the 15 mile radius chosen by P/A Design Resources. 2012 statistics for LTC are 36% cremations, 58% interments and 6% entombments.

Hayward's Holy Sepulchre Cemetery has approximately 60 undeveloped acres which could accommodate an average of 120,000 traditional burials not counting cremation spaces. Those properties with undeveloped space are continually expanding to meet current demand. Lone Tree Cemetery is presently adding an Asian Garden to meet its demand.

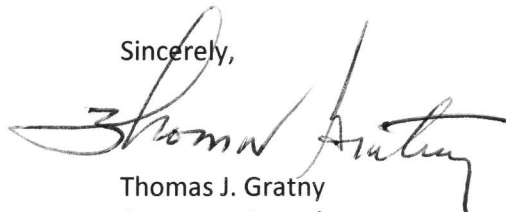
I have walked the proposed property and have some physical concerns regarding the amount of water to be consumed from wells and the development of graves and buildings on hillsides. An example would be the 1997 slippage that occurred at Chapel of the Chimes resulting in over 200 graves covered with dirt. This slide area was caused due to water accumulating under burial vaults resting on hard pan. In time a small lake is formed and the structural integrity is compromised. In addition, the East Bay Area is subject to faults. USGS scientists describe the Hayward Fault as "A Tectonic Time Bomb, due anytime for another magnitude 6.8 to 7.0 earthquake." A factor making the Hayward fault so dangerous now is that its most recent damaging earthquake was 140 years ago. USGS scientists have found evidence for 12 quakes on the southern Hayward fault during the past 1,900 years. Ominously, the last five events (in 1315, 1470, 1630, 1725 and 1868) occurred at intervals of 95 to 160 years, with an average interval of 138 years. The 140th anniversary of the 1868 Hayward fault earthquake was observed in 2008, and scientists are convinced that the Hayward fault has reached the point where a powerful, damaging quake can be expected at any time. According to a 1996 Earthquake engineering research institute report, the next major Hayward Fault Quake is expected to cause significant loss of life and extensive damage to homes, business and infrastructure. With that said; the building of private family mausoleums on top of a hillside, seem impractical even though the edifice is built to California Earthquake Code. The concept of a Memorial Park which allows only flat markers prevents the dangerous conditions of upright monuments and private family estates during a 6-7.0 earthquake.

Some factors have evolved that should be considered by the planning department.

1. Does the Tri-Valley Area have enough land available for meeting the demand over the next 20 years?
 - A. Yes, even though some smaller cemeteries may not have space available, many cemeteries do.
2. What impact on water availability?
 - A. To irrigate an acre would cause little impact. However, to irrigate 155 acres would require irrigation every day. The water in that area is shared with other large properties that require a lot less than that which would be needed for a cemetery. With major water sources (EBMUD) requesting 20-30% cutbacks on irrigation, the water may soon be consumed for the benefit of the cemetery only.

The information gathered in your memo may be misleading or inaccurate regarding cemetery burial spaces; however, it only confirms that the Tri-Valley Area can maintain the current death rate for years to come with the current cemetery land space available within the 15 mile radius of the area. Should you have further requests, please contact me. Thank you for the opportunity to share my research with you.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Gratny
Cemetery Consultant