

December 12, 2014

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, 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 \$407,763.74 in it at the beginning of the past fiscal year, because of the very low interest rates now being paid, only \$547.38 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 2015 report. \$5,179.22 was donated in 2014 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. \$53,800.84 was received this past fiscal year from special donations, including a special donation by James and Shirley Wood designated for paving in Oak Lawn. Because of their very generous donation, all the streets north of the north gate entrance were paved this year. The Board extends its appreciation to Mr. and Mrs. Wood for this special donation.

Special projects completed this past year included (1) placing seventeen additional street sign at various intersections in Oak Lawn to aid people in locating lots, (2) opening a new section on the north end of Oak Lawn, which involved building roads around the section and placing survey markers in the section, and (3) rental of a paving machine for \$5,162.02. The Board plans to continue repairing broken or leaning monuments in the upcoming year. 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. Your input on this project will be appreciated.

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.

In the fall of 2012 a wildflower seed mix was planted along the roadway from the Greenwood Road/Cemetery Road intersection to the south Oak Lawn Cemetery entrance and also in a two to three acre area surrounding the pavilion on the east side of Oak Lawn. We hope many of you were able to enjoy this display this past year, and we look forward to enjoying the wildflowers again each spring and summer.

#### **FINANCIAL REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR 10/1/13 - 9/30/14**

##### **ENDOWMENT FUND BALANCE:**

Endowment Funds (includes \$9,295.32 new endowment deposits/donations) \$ 417,606.44

##### **INCOME/EXPENSE STATEMENT:**

Total Income Deposited into General Fund	\$ 21,891.00
Total Interest Income Earned on Endowment Funds	\$ 547.38
Total Disbursements out of General Fund (operating expenses)	(69,312.19)
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Total Income Special Projects Fund (donations + interest)	\$ 53,800.84
Total Disbursements out of Special Projects Fund – Paving paid October, 2014	(40,162.02)

## DECATUR CEMETERY BOARD 2014 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 price of burial plots is the same in both cemeteries. The current price is \$500.00 for each grave space, which includes a perpetual care fee to provide upkeep of the space. 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 membership 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, also 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, excessive flower arrangements and other items interfere with the mowing, with some of these items posing a potential safety hazard for the mowing crew. 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. A list of some of the Rules and Regulations in effect are included on a separate page in this 2014 report. **A complete list of the rules**, as well as other information about the cemeteries, **can be viewed on the “[decatuortx.org](http://decatuortx.org)” website** by typing “Cemetery” in the search box on the website’s home page. This Cemetery page on the City’s website just went online in November, 2014, so please visit it.

**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 2014 are listed with other donors in this report.

**2014 CEMETERY OPERATION** – Both Oak Lawn and Sand Hill Cemeteries are maintained by private mowing firms. Oak Lawn was mowed numerous times by the mowing firm winning the low bid annual contract of \$44,311.56. In the past fiscal year Sand Hill was mowed seven times at \$375.00 per mowing. 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, adding dirt to graves needing maintenance, and spraying grass killer around curbs and monuments to eliminate the need for weed-eating.

Besides mowing expenses, other cemetery expenses include insurance and taxes on cemetery property, purchase of dirt to fill in graves (\$740.00 for four 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.

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. Since the day-by-day cemetery expenditures have been greatly exceeding the cemetery’s income, donations to the Special Projects Fund, either as regular donations or memorials, are very important in helping the Board to plan extra or special projects. Special projects completed in 2014 are listed on page 1 of this report. A special thanks to those who made donations to the Cemetery in 2014 and whose names are listed on the “Donors” page in this report.

Partial Listing of Cemetery Rules and Regulations

Prior to 2010 the Cemetery Board had these rules in place:

- 1. White rock, gravel, or decorative rock are **not allowed** on a lot.
- 2. **No more than one flower arrangement is allowed per grave space.**
- 3. A base is required when setting a monument to secure the monument in place.
- 4. Caskets are not required to have an outside container (wooden box or concrete vault).
- 5. Permission must be obtained from the Grounds Chairman before

herbicides are used. In 2010 the Board put additional rules in effect:

- 1. No permanent planting of trees, hedges, shrubs, or flowers are allowed in any part of the cemetery.
- 2. The placement of any decorative items such as benches, seats, lights, chimes, toys, carpet, fences, etc. that impede or prevent the mowing or maintenance of the cemetery is prohibited. All such property shall not be replaced. Cemetery grounds keepers may remove any items that are considered a safety hazard.
- 3. Curbs – (1) must be a minimum of 8 inches wide on the north, east, and south sides; (2) must be a minimum of 16 inches on the west side and be poured level; (3) cannot exceed 6 inches in height; they must be stair-stepped down to meet the height requirements; (4) must originate no higher than 1 inch from the highest corner of burial lot; (5) must be a minimum of 6 inches thick and must contain doubled steel reinforcements; and (6) must be made of concrete only.
- 4. In blocks 35 – 41 **no curbs** are allowed. Only corner lot markers are allowed in these sections and must be made of granite, marble, or bronze metal and set at ground level.
- 5. Headstones/footstones – are to be made of granite, marble, or bronze metal; only one upright monument/marker is allowed to be placed at the head of a grave and only one footstone at the foot of a grave. Family markers may be placed in the center of a two-row lot. All graves must be marked with a durable monument/marker within one year from the date of burial.

In 2012 the Board enacted rules pertaining to the burial of cremains:

- 1. Only two sets of cremains will be allowed to be buried in one grave space.
- 2. Only one set of cremains can be buried in the same grave space with one other burial.

**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:

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\_\_\_\_\_