

CITY OF AUSTIN CEMETERY OPERATIONS

CEMETERY RULES COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR GRAVE SITES AND MEMORIALS

Purpose:

The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to establish the notice and resolution process for grave sites in conflict with the Memorial and General Regulations Sections of the City of Austin Cemetery Rules and Regulations.

Summary:

The City of Austin, through the Parks and Recreation Department, assumed administrative and operational responsibility for municipal cemeteries effective April 1, 2013. This action included sales, customer support, grounds maintenance and oversight of contracted burial services for all five (5) City of Austin cemeteries. Grounds maintenance includes turf, vegetation and infrastructure maintenance and on occasions, shrubs and vegetation planted by family members or memorials adjacent to headstones can impact grounds crews' ability to effectively maintain cemetery grounds. Beginning October 1, 2013, city maintenance crews will begin the formal process to identify, provide notice, and time to comply and remove if necessary, vegetation and memorials that are in violation of the Memorials Section of the City of Austin Rules and Regulations.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES:

MEMORIALS as stated in the Cemetery Rules and Regulations

1. All memorials shall be installed and maintained at the expense of the owner.
2. Only one memorial will be permitted on one grave space. A companion or family memorial may be placed upon two or more grave spaces. Memorials will be placed in alignment with adjacent memorials and centered at the head of the grave space. The actual location for memorials will be determined by cemetery personnel.
3. Space or lot corner markers will be set flush with the turf.
4. Flush type Memorials
 - a. The marking of each space or grave in areas designated for flush type memorials is restricted and limited to memorials set flush with the turf, and of such dimensions, materials, design, finish and construction as indicated in this section.
 - b. Flush type memorials shall be made of granite marble or cast bronze installed on granite, marble or concrete base. Granite and marble memorials and bases shall have smooth sides and bottoms and a minimum thickness of four inches (4"), concrete bases shall have a minimum thickness of six inches (6") and shall be smooth on all sides.

- c. All flush memorials shall be set on a minimum of two inches (2") of sand for cushioning and leveling
- d. The length of flush type memorials shall be at least ten inches (10") less than the grave space width.
- 5. Above Ground Materials
 - a. In areas of the cemetery not specifically designated for flush type memorials either an above ground or flush type memorial may be used.
 - b. All above ground memorials shall be of marble, granite or similar permanent type stone.
 - c. Memorials used above the ground level to mark a grave shall not exceed the following dimensions:
 - 1) The base shall not exceed 18 inches in width
 - 2) The overall height shall not exceed 42 inches.
 - 3) The length shall be at least ten inches less than the grave space width.
- 6. Should any existing memorial or mausoleum become unsightly, dilapidated, or a menace to the safety of persons within the cemeteries, the Superintendent shall have the right to correct the condition or to remove same. The expense of such removal or repair may be charged to the space owner.

GENERAL REGULATIONS as stated in the Cemetery Rules and Regulations

- 1. Visitors or workers shall use only the avenues, walkways, and roads, unless it becomes necessary to walk across other spaces or graves to gain access to a space or grave.
- 2. Automobiles, trucks and other vehicles shall not be driven through the cemetery grounds at a speed greater than fifteen (15) miles per hour. Unauthorized vehicles may not be driven or parked off the designated roadways or parking areas.
- 3. Pets shall not be allowed in the cemetery.
- 4. The use of intoxicating beverages within the cemeteries is strictly forbidden.
- 5. No person will be permitted to use profane or boisterous language or in any way disturb the quiet and good order of the cemetery.
- 6. No boxes, shells, toys, discarded glassware, sprinkler cans, water, hoses, or similar articles will be permitted to remain on any grave, walkway or street.
- 7. The Superintendent has the authority to enter upon any space and to remove any objectionable thing that may have been placed there contrary to the regulations, and he may remove any dead or damaged flowers, trees, shrubs or vines.
- 8. All persons are strictly forbidden to break or injure any tree or shrub, or mar any landmark, marker or memorial or in any way deface the grounds of the cemetery.
- 9. No person or persons (except peace officers or a military guard of honor) shall be permitted to bring or carry firearms within the Cemetery.
- 10. No signs other than those installed by City personnel will be permitted on the cemetery grounds.
- 11. The City of Austin is not responsible for vandalism or theft of any memorial or other personal property.
- 12. The construction, installation or placing of any wooden, concrete or cast iron bench, chair or table, or any wooden or wire trellis, shall not be permitted on the cemetery grounds.
- 13. The construction of additional mounds over graves shall not be permitted.

14. Holders such as clay or plastic pots, wire, frames, etc., containing flowers or other decorations may be removed as soon as the flowers fade or wither and the right is reserved by the Cemetery to make such removal.
15. Placing of potted plants, cut flowers, or baskets is permitted on graves in all cemeteries; however, to improve the appearance and to aid in maintenance, all potted plants, cut flowers, and baskets may be removed each month. Funeral designs or floral pieces will be removed from the graves when they become wilted or unsightly. Persons desiring to retain same must remove them within 72 hours. Artificial flowers may be placed on graves for holidays with the understanding that they will be removed thirty (30) days after the holiday. The digging of holes for placement of plants or flowers is strictly prohibited.
16. In sections designated for flush type memorials, plants, cut flowers, shall be placed only in the invertible type bronze vases provided for that purpose.
17. In the interest of maintenance, planting of ivy, flowers, shrubs, or bushes is prohibited. Long lived hardwood trees such as Live Oak, Spanish Oak, American Elm, and Cedar Elm may be planted with the approval of the Superintendent.
18. If any trees or shrubs situated on any space shall become detrimental, unsightly, or impede access to adjacent spaces, walks, or roads, they may be pruned or removed in whole or in part as determined necessary by the Superintendent.
19. Personnel employed by the cemeteries are not permitted to solicit or accept money or other compensation from any person or persons for maintenance performed within the Cemetery. All inquiries or complaints shall be made at the Cemetery office.
20. The grounds are sacredly devoted to the burial of the dead and the provisions and penalties of the law, as provided by statute, will be strictly enforced in all cases of wanton inquiry, disturbance, and disregard of the rules.
21. There shall be a strict observance of all the properties due the Cemetery, whether embraced in the foregoing regulations or not, as no impropriety will be tolerated.

COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

1. Cemetery crews shall inspect and observe gravesite violations and mark the grave site with a temporary tag and colored flag.
 - a. The tag shall include the space Section/Lot/Space Number and be affixed to the flag.
2. The Cemetery Grounds Supervisor will photograph the violation, as well as the headstone, flag and violation notice tag. Camera settings will reflect date and time of photographing.
3. Photographs will be downloaded to a Cemetery Compliance database.
4. Notice date, headstone name, nature of violation, cemetery, Block/Lot/Space information will be entered into the Cemetery Compliance Database
5. Cemetery staff will attempt to contact the family of the grave site in violation to advise of the notice and pending action
6. Reminder will be calendared at 31 days to prepare a work order. The corresponding violation photograph will be printed and attached to the work order and submitted to the Cemetery Grounds Supervisor.
7. Cemetery Grounds Supervisor will assign crew members to remove violations, and tidy up the site, noting on the work order what materials were disposed of, and what materials might have been kept/stored, if applicable.

- a. Grounds supervisor shall also complete an estimate of costs, including staff time and disposal fees for billing to family members, if available.
8. Crew will take a picture upon completion. Camera settings will reflect date and time of photographing.
9. Completion photographs will be downloaded to Cemetery Compliance database to match up with “before” photographs.
10. The Cemetery Compliance database will be updated with a description of materials disposed of and materials kept, as well as date of completion.
11. The decision as to what materials will be disposed of and what materials will be retained at the time of clean-up, is at the discretion of the Superintendent (Cemetery Manager) and as defined by the Cemetery Rules and Regulations provided above. Example: mulch, broken items, rocks will be disposed of immediately, and statues, pavers and benches will be retained temporarily.)
12. Retained materials will be stored at Austin Memorial Park Cemetery for 15 days before permanent disposition.

Attachments:

(Violation tag to be affixed to flag)