



2014-2015
Madera County Grand Jury
Final Report
1415-01 Madera Cemetery District

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Introduction:

The Grand Jury conducted an inquiry into the operation of the Madera Cemetery District. The Grand Jury interviewed employees and Board members, made visits to all District cemeteries except Raymond, and reviewed extensive written documents relating to the operation of the District. The written documents included: prior year audits; annual financial report for 2013-14; 2014-15 budget; policies and procedures manual; the employee handbook; and the schedule of fees charged for interment services.

The Grand Jury acknowledges the time and courtesy of District employees in assisting with the inquiry into the operation of the District.

Facts:

1. The Madera Cemetery District is a Special District of the State of California that operates five district cemeteries --- Arbor Vitae and Calvary in Madera, Oakhill in Oakhurst, North Fork, and Raymond.
2. The Madera Cemetery District includes only a portion of Madera County.
3. The Madera Cemetery District is governed by a five member Board of Trustees appointed by the Board of Supervisors for four year terms. Trustee terms end four years after the date of the original appointment. When there is a vacancy on the Board of Trustees, District staff and Trustees recommend individuals to the Board of Supervisors to fill the vacancy.
4. The Madera Cemetery District has 19 full and part-time employees, who are under the direction of the Madera Cemetery District Manager.
5. The Madera Cemetery District operates on an approximate two million dollar annual budget, which is derived from a combination of property taxes and fees for interment services.
6. Burial records are a combination of paper records and computer based records. The electronic records are backed up to a tape on a regular basis.

Findings:

1. The Madera Cemetery District provides a full range of interment services with the specific services varying by each cemetery.
2. The cemeteries are well maintained and are visually attractive.
3. Employees are professional in appearance, personable in their behavior, knowledgeable in their areas of expertise, and helpful to members of the public.

4. Each cemetery has equipment and tools necessary to provide interments and to maintain the facilities. Shop facilities are neat, and the equipment is well maintained.
5. With one exception at the North Fork Cemetery, appropriate safety equipment and personal protective gear is available at each cemetery.
6. The Madera Cemetery District has a policies and procedure manual and an employee manual.
7. Trustees are typically reappointed to ongoing terms unless a trustee does not want to continue to serve or is deceased. The term ending date for trustees is not in compliance with Health and Safety Code Section 9024(a), which requires that terms commence on the first Monday in January.
8. The Madera Cemetery District is in compliance with the basic requirements of the Brown Act.
9. Burial records are maintained on paper at most cemeteries, and they can be used to search for burial location and information. Some burial records at Arbor Vitae are stored electronically. Searching burial records at Oakhill, Calvary, and North Fork Cemeteries requires a search of paper documents.
10. Most employees have maintained longstanding employment with the Madera Cemetery District, and most promotions have been “in-house”.
11. The Madera Cemetery District has planned for future expansions by acquiring additional land in Oakhurst and land adjacent to Calvary Cemetery.
12. The capacity of the Hillview water system in Oakhurst impacts the ability of the Oakhill Cemetery to water the cemetery property and to stay within watering restrictions.
13. The Madera Cemetery District is in good fiscal condition with adequate income and reserves.

Recommendations:

The Grand Jury recommends that Madera Cemetery District:

1. Install an emergency eyewash and shower at the North Fork Cemetery.
2. When a trustee vacancy occurs, publically advertise the vacancy and collect applications for the Board of Supervisors consideration.
3. Bring trustee terms into alignment with the requirements of Health and Safety Code Section 9024(a).
4. Scan all paper records so that they can be stored electronically, and consider converting to “cloud” storage for backup of electronic records.
5. Install computers at each cemetery (except Raymond) so that all burial records can be stored electronically and searched from any cemetery.

6. Investigate the feasibility of constructing a well at the Oakhill Cemetery in conjunction with developing the newly acquired land that is adjacent to the cemetery.
7. Continue the practices that have made the Madera Cemetery District an efficient provider of interment services for residents of the District.

Respondents:

Board of Trustees
Madera Cemetery District
1301 Roberts Avenue
Madera, CA 93637

Madera County Board of Supervisors
200 W. 4th Street
Madera, CA 93637