

Let's Talk About...

CEMETERY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Public Works employees are mowing and edging at Oakwood Cemetery this week. On Friday, the wilted, faded, non-seasonal, and broken items will be removed. The goal is to create a clean slate, a blank canvas where family and friends can leave attractive autumn or winter tributes to their loved ones during the upcoming holiday seasons, without viewing a scattering of faded Easter eggs and spring flowers three feet away.

Readers of the 8/21/2020 edition of this column know that there are city ordinances specifically about Oakwood cemetery that have not been enforced in the past. This week will not address those violations. No benches will be removed. No gravel or rock on plots will be removed. No trees or bushes will be cut down. This week represents a first step in what we hope will become an ongoing program of Oakwood maintenance and improvement. Frankly, since it is a first step, it will be a baby step.

What about the city ordinances? Ordinances are rules by which a community chooses to live. Just as life is a dynamic process, full of constant changes, ordinances must be flexible to accommodate social, economic, and environmental changes. They should be reviewed periodically to determine if they still serve the needs and desires of the community. Cool heads making intelligent decisions should evaluate whether each ordinance should be changed, removed or remain as written. Then there is a process for implementing those decisions.

We are looking for those cool heads. Mayor Jim McInnis has agreed to head a Cemetery Advisory Committee, composed of volunteers. Members will be tasked with becoming familiar with the current cemetery ordinances, walking the cemetery to see the effectiveness of those ordinances, talking to the personnel responsible for the maintenance of the grounds, evaluating the effects of growth and the level of sustainability, and then deciding how to go forward. Recommendations will be presented to the City Council for consideration.

If you are interested in serving on this committee, applications are available at City Hall and should be submitted by November 1. The committee will have a maximum of 8 members. If there are more than 8 volunteers, names will be drawn out of a hat. After the ordinance review is completed and recommendations are made, the committee's work will be done, unless the members decide to continue.

Oakwood Cemetery belongs to this community. We hope community members will step forward to make Oakwood an asset that we can all take pride in.