



MAY – JUNE 2021

Orange County Cemetery District

TRUSTEES

Maribel Marroquin, Chair
William E. Nelson, Vice Chair
Noel Hatch
Kelly Rivers
Cynthia Ward

25751 Trabuco Road
Lake Forest, CA 92630
(949) 951-9102 – Phone
(949) 951-0236 - Fax
www.occemeterydistrict.com

Tim Deutsch, General Manager

FEMA to Reimburse Funeral Expenses for COVID-19 Deaths

If you have lost a loved one due to COVID-19, you may be eligible to receive reimbursement for funeral related expenses incurred after January 1, 2020 through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

To be eligible for funeral assistance, you must meet these conditions:

- The death must have occurred in the United States, including the U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia.
- The death certificate must indicate the death was attributed to COVID-19.
- The applicant must be a U.S. citizen, non-citizen national, or qualified alien, who incurred funeral expenses **after January 1, 2020.**

Please be aware that any source of payment designated specifically to pay for a funeral in anticipation of a future death cannot be reimbursed under this assistance. This includes burial or funeral insurance, a pre-paid funeral contract, a pre-paid trust for funeral expenses, or an irrevocable trust for Medicare.

There is no requirement for the deceased person to have been a U.S. citizen, non-citizen national, or qualified alien.

HOW TO APPLY

FEMA is currently processing applications. To start the process, call the dedicated toll-free COVID-19 Funeral Assistance Line Number at:

844-684-6333

TTY: 800-462-7585

**Hours of Operation: Mon-Fri.
9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Eastern Time**

Due to extreme call volumes, it is likely you will experience delays in reaching a FEMA Representative. FEMA asks for your patience as they work to correct these issues. Please know, there is no deadline to apply and every applicant will have an opportunity to open a case. Multilingual services are available.

When you call, it should take about 20 minutes to apply. **It is important to gather all necessary information and documentation BEFORE applying for assistance.** This will help FEMA take the application and process it in a timely manner. This documentation should include:

- An official death certificate that attributes the death directly or indirectly to COVID-19 and shows that the death occurred in the U.S., including U.S. territories and the District of Columbia.

- Funeral expense documents that include the applicant's name, the deceased person's name, the amount of funeral expenses, and the dates the funeral expenses happened.

Once you have applied, you will be given an application number and you must provide your supporting documentation to FEMA by either mailing or faxing the documents to FEMA or uploading them to your DisasterAssistance.gov account.

Funeral Homes and cemeteries are not eligible to apply on behalf of a family or to be a co-applicant on the Funeral Assistance application. The person applying must be an individual, not a business, who incurred the funeral expenses.

Funeral Assistance Funding

Assistance is limited to a maximum of \$9,000 per funeral and a maximum of \$35,500 per application per state, territory, or the District of Columbia.

Visit the FEMA Website

For more information about FEMA Funeral Assistance, please visit:

<https://www.fema.gov/disasters/coronavirus/economic/funeral-assistance>

New Public Cemetery Development Update at Gypsum Canyon

The mission of the Orange County Cemetery District is to provide County residents with the most affordable and dignified interment options possible. Currently, El Toro Memorial Park is the only public cemetery in Orange County with available casket space. At the current rate of sale, it is possible that El Toro Memorial Park could also be sold out in 4 to 6 years. Therefore, the Board of Trustees is acutely aware of the pressing need to develop a new fourth public cemetery in the near future.

For the last two years, the District has conducted various site assessments on the Gypsum Canyon property gifted to the District by the County of Orange. Through those studies, the District has determined that of the total 283 acres, 92 acres can be developed for the new public cemetery, 96 acres is being reserved for the possible development of a new Veterans cemetery, 76 acres is an unusable slope that separates the upper Veterans parcel from the lower public cemetery land, and the remaining 19 acres is a shared area needed for site access by the District and other agencies such as OC Parks.

PHASE 1 PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATES

At the January Board Meeting, RJM Design Group presented a preliminary cost estimate to the Board for the first phase of cemetery development on the property. The estimate has two broad categories: Shared Costs and Phase 1 Public Cemetery Development.

Because the County of Orange has tasked the District with reserving 50% of the developable acreage for a future Veterans Cemetery, the District must consider the potential needs of the Veterans Cemetery as well as its own public cemetery when establishing basic infrastructure such as utilities, roads, and overall site grading. These costs are labeled as "Shared Costs", because they are necessary to develop both the lower and upper parcels. With so much uncertainty surrounding the establishment of the Veterans Cemetery, the District must absorb these costs on its own.

In its original design, RJM estimated that initial Shared Costs would be almost \$18 million. The first phase of public cemetery development would cost an additional \$35.6 million, for a total cost of about \$53 million. Even with the \$11.3 million that the District has committed to future cemetery development, it was clear that a \$53 million dollar



This revised rendering for the first phase of the public cemetery development, with minimized lawn interment area, reductions in road improvements, minimized landscaping, and a switch to modular office space, saves approximately \$14 million, reducing the overall project costs from \$53 to \$39 million.

project was not fiscally sound for the District to consider. Since January, RJM has developed three alternate design plans for consideration at the April Board Meeting.

The alternate plans included variations to the original footprint, road reductions, landscape reductions, lawn interment space reductions and modifications to structures such as committal shelters, niche areas, restroom facilities and office space.

Ultimately, the Board agreed on a plan that retained the best footprint for locating the cemetery office, but utilizes a modular building. Lawn interment space was reduced to 5.2 acres with the option of developing 3 additional acres. Shared Costs were reduced from \$18 million to \$15.8 million and the first phase of public cemetery development was reduced from \$35.6 million to \$23.3 million, for a

total project cost of approximately \$39 million.

THE NEXT STEPS

The District must now find out from the City of Anaheim what the required California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process will be. The District expects that a new Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be required, which typically takes 12 to 18 months to complete. With that in mind, the Board authorized LSA to conduct a biological assessment of the Gypsum Canyon property. This assessment is only one part of the EIR and can only be done in the spring, so it was critical it be completed now.

As the District works to obtain the necessary CEQA clearances it can also begin to develop construction documents and secure financing. If all goes smoothly, construction may begin within 18 to 22 months.

Remember our Veterans Via a Virtual Memorial Day Observance Video!

As we continue to battle the COVID-19 virus, we are slowly starting to see a return to normalcy with schools and businesses gradually reopening. At this time, however, the District feels it would be unwise to hold a large gathering where hundreds of people are close together with social distancing almost impossible to achieve. Our Veterans, however, will not be forgotten!

Watch Our Virtual Memorial Day Observance Video!

We have reached out to many of the organizations that faithfully participate in our Memorial Day Observances and asked them to record a short video segment that will be combined to create a virtual Memorial Day Program. The video will be available to view over the entire Memorial Day Weekend on the District's website as well as on our Facebook pages. On Facebook, simply search for: Orange County Cemetery District, Anaheim Cemetery, Santa Ana Cemetery, or El Toro Memorial Park. To view the video on our website please visit: www.occemeterydistrict.com.

So far, our virtual program will include: vocal performances by soloist John Huntington and the Orange High School Chamber Singers; Memorial Day Remarks by Mayor Sarmiento of Santa Ana, Mayor Murphy of Orange, and Mayor Kelley of Mission Viejo; an Honor Guard Firing Salute from VFW Post 6024 with Commander Bob Franzwa, Rene Macare, Clark Courtney, and A.J. Summa; a reading of General Logan's Order by Darrell Rivers of the Huntington Beach Historical Society; and a wreath presentation by the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War at



Santa Ana Cemetery's Soldier's Monument. Bagpiper, Jim Clements will perform *Amazing Grace*, and *Taps* will be performed by Boy Scout Michael McPhie of Troop 2020. The Mission Viejo Chapter DAR will also provide opening and closing remarks.

In addition, the District has received multiple requests from Scout Troops and other volunteers to help place flags on every Veteran's grave at all three cemeteries in advance of the of the holiday.

Thank you to all our Veterans who have sacrificed so much to protect our freedom! And, thanks to all those striving to make sure our Veterans are remembered!



Eagle Scout Project Helps Honor Veterans

Conner Hassel, with Boy Scout Troop 2020 of Mission Viejo, delivered 150 metal wreath holders that he and a team of 11 volunteers made for use at El Toro Memorial Park. The holders will be a great addition to the annual Wreaths Across America Program that takes place every December to honor Veterans. Instead of just laying a wreath flat on the ground, these holders will allow wreaths to be

displayed upright. Conner raised \$760 to buy supplies and the compact rod bending tool needed to make the holders. The team then painted them all a forest green which will blend nicely with the wreaths and lawns. It took Conner about a month to come up with the perfect process for making the holders and about two weeks for his team to actually produce them. Thanks for all your hard work, Conner!

Pre-Need Casket Space Sales Now Limited at El Toro Memorial Park

Due to the rapid pace of sales of casket interment space at El Toro Memorial Park, the District's Board of Trustees has approved staff's recommendation to limit pre-need purchases of casket space to no more than two double-depth casket spaces per household sharing the same street or mailing address. This is effective as of the April 6, 2021 Board Meeting when the motion was approved.

The policy should help to extend the longevity of available spaces at El Toro Memorial Park, thereby making it possible to continue to assist families who have had a death occur and need immediate burial, but have not previously purchased interment space.

The policy should also help to prevent the abandonment of spaces. This has been a common problem at both

Anaheim and Santa Ana Cemetery, when in the past, multiple spaces or even entire lots were purchased by one family member. The intent was that they would be used by other family members. Over time, however, relatives either forgot about the spaces or decide not to use them. Sadly, this results in spaces that are never used. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation regarding this restriction.

ORANGE COUNTY CEMETERY DISTRICT

May/June Board Meetings

The Board of Trustees for the Orange County Cemetery District holds regular meetings the first Tuesday of every month at 10:00 a.m. at the District Office located at 25751 Trabuco Road, Lake Forest, CA 92630. **Until further notice these meetings are being video conferenced, but the public may also attend electronically. Please call the District office for the meeting link.**

Agendas are available at least 72 hours prior to each meeting and are also posted on our website at www.occemeterydistrict.com. In May and June, meetings will be held as follows:

- **Tuesday, May 4th at 10:00 a.m.**
- **Tuesday, June 1st at 10:00 a.m.**

If you have any questions or need additional information please contact the District Secretary, Mary Funk at (949) 951-9102 ext. 110.

Flower Removal and Holiday Schedule

Every Wednesday, groundskeepers remove and discard flowers and decorations throughout all three cemeteries. Families are encouraged to remove their flowers and/or decorations on Tuesday night. You can then place the flowers back on the space on Wednesday afternoon. Please remember that the District policy only allows for two items to be placed on gravesites. This includes the in-ground flower vase and one other item. If gravesites exceed the number of allowed items, staff may remove and discard the excess items. Please do not leave items of great monetary or sentimental value on gravesites as the District cannot prevent theft.

Throughout the year, various holidays are recognized with extended periods between flower clean-ups. During these times, we do ask that you empty the vase and place fresh water in the container every four to five days to eliminate mosquito breeding sources, which can cause serious health issues. Your cooperation in this regard is greatly appreciated.



In honor of Mothers' Day, flowers may be placed on Thursday, April 29th and must be removed by Tuesday, May 18th.

Flowers may be placed for Memorial Day on Thursday, May 20th and must be removed the day after the holiday, by Tuesday, June 1st.

Flowers for Fathers' Day and Independence Day may be placed on Thursday, June 10th and must be removed by Tuesday, July 13th.

A complete listing of the District's extended holiday flower schedule for 2021 is available on our website at <https://www.occemeterydistrict.com/>. Click on the tab for Flowers, Markers and Rules for more information.

CEMETERY VISITATION HOURS

Anaheim Cemetery and Santa Ana Cemetery are open year-round for visitation, seven days a week, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

El Toro Memorial Park is open seven days a week from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

When Daylight Saving Time ends on November 7, 2021, the park will close for visitation at 5:00 p.m.

Offices are open M-F from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
All offices are closed on the weekends and on holidays.

Our Mission Statement & Values

The Orange County Cemetery District manages and maintains Orange County's public cemeteries in a manner that preserves their beauty, dignity, historical and cultural values, and offers affordable interment service for County residents.

The Trustees and staff of the Orange County Cemetery District are committed to the following values:

- Integrity ■ Respect ■ Accountability
- Responsiveness ■ Empathy ■ Transparency
- Appreciation for Diverse Needs

