**The Athens Cemetery Committee Meeting**

**Thursday, March 13, 2025**

The West Cemetery Board met to discuss the 2025/2026 budget and mowing contract. The meeting started at 6:30 p.m. Cemetery board members present were Linda Wasilewski, Deni Wilson, Cemetery Chair Rachel Lantz, and Alderman Angella Thompson.  Also present - City Treasurer, Derrick Fritz and Athens Deputy Clerk, Monica Brumm.

The primary item for discussion was the budget. For the 2024/2025 year, the cemetery ended in the red by almost $6,000.  This was due to the fact that the cemetery had to pay $8,700 to have several trees trimmed or removed.  The cemetery operates primarily on the money earned from leased farmland. This past year, that income was $7,684 and would have more than covered the 9-month mowing expenses.  The cemetery also sold 2 plots for an extra $400 of income. Additionally, the cemetery has over $17,000 in CDs at Alliance Community Bank.  Dipping into the CDs was discussed as a possibility in the coming years if the farmland lease doesn’t bring in what is necessary to cover the operating costs of the cemetery.  The lease for the land is up in November, so bids will be solicited in September/October.  Treasurer Fritz presented his proposed budget for the cemetery. Taking publishing fees, contract labor, general supplies and mowing into consideration, the budget was set at $8,600.

Deni Wilson brought up the possible expense of mapping graves (this was discussed in previous meetings).  Grants and volunteers were discussed as possibilities, and Treasurer Fritz suggested one or more board members learn how to use the city’s GPS mapping system.  It is accurate to within 3 inches.

The next item of business on the agenda was the mowing contract.  Chris Hermes is currently employed to mow the cemetery.  He is nearing the end of his first year of mowing, and the contract stipulates an additional two years if the city and board members are pleased with his performance.  The recommendation was made to extend his contract, and the board agreed.  Rachel Lantz will bring this recommendation to the city council.

Old business included getting Rod Clark’s permission to remove overgrowth on the cemetery’s fence line.  It had been recommended several months back that the cemetery get his signed permission to remove the overgrowth and throw it onto his property for disposal.  Deni Wilson produced a written agreement for Mr. Clark to sign.  Rachel Lantz signed the document, and it was handed to Linda Wasilewski to deliver to Mr. Clark.

Old business also included discussion of benches to commemorate former Aldermen Larry Buhr and Ron Canterbury.  Getting quotes on expense had stalled out.  Treasurer Fritz indicated he had a few catalogs that might be helpful, and Deputy Clerk Brumm said she would contact Greenview to see how they acquired composite benches.  The cemetery board would prefer composite benches that will not rust or rot.

Meeting adjourned at 6:46.