

Review of cemetery guidelines

The City of Sidney's goal is to work with family members to properly maintain the Graceland Cemetery in a fashion to respectfully remember those who have preceded us. To accomplish this goal, there are rules in place for the general public and visitors to the Graceland Cemetery pertaining to the placement and removal of gravesite decorations. Without adherence to these policies, the mowing, trimming, and straightening of monuments would exceed the capacities of the cemetery staff. The City of Sidney's desire is to keep the appearance of Graceland Cemetery esthetically pleasing, in the safest and most efficient manner possible.

Rules of Cemetery (from ordinance 921)

No person shall disturb the quiet and good order of the cemetery by loud or boisterous noise or improper conduct.

Pets brought into the cemetery shall be kept on a leash and are permitted only on the roadway. The pet owner or handler shall pick up animal waste and dispose of it off-site.

All monuments shall be set upon a foundation installed by the City per the fee set by Section 921.02. The foundation will not be installed by the City until the soil has properly settled following the burial. The City Manager or his designee shall determine when a monument may be placed within the Cemetery.

No planting of woody plants is permitted on any grave.

Flowers may be planted in a bed next to the monument foundation. However, flowers may not be planted around any flat marker.

All flower beds shall be maintained by the lot owner or next-of-kin.

If a flowerbed becomes unsightly, cemetery personnel shall remove the bed and re-seed.

Temporary floral arrangements may be set next to the grave for a period of seven days before and seven days after Memorial Day.

Between November 15 and April 1, winter wreaths or grave blankets will be permitted. Winter wreaths and grave blankets must be removed by April 2 or they will be removed by the City.

General cleaning of the cemetery will begin each year during the second full week following Easter. All grave decorations must be removed from the cemetery grounds.

Deteriorated, unsightly and inappropriate grave decorations, as determined by the City Manager or his designee, shall be removed. The cemetery personnel will not retain or store items removed from a grave.

No monument or grave marker shall be placed on an indigent gravesite unless payment is made, in full, of the City's expenses for indigent services.

Due to health and safety concerns for the public maintenance workers, as well as to avoid the appearance of clutter, the following items will not be allowed on the cemetery grounds or around gravesites:

- (1) Styrofoam cups and containers
- (2) Decorative fencing
- (3) Rocks and stones
- (4) Wire or objects made of wire
- (5) Glass, ceramic, or other similar ornamental objects (i.e. benches, garden stones, statuary, Sheppard's hooks, low voltage lighting, etc)
- (6) Cardboard or paper
- (7) Toys or stuffed animals
- (8) Balloons or inflatable items

A general rule of thumb – if the decoration is not completely secured to the foundation or headstone (monument), it is not allowed. The above items that are “freestanding” or in the grass will be removed by the city staff and placed in a fenced, locked storage area.

They will be available for pick up during the hours of operations at Graceland (7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.) for a minimum of two weeks after removal. Flower arrangements will not

be saved in the storage area. Further clarification, if needed, can be obtained by contacting the Office at Graceland Cemetery at 498-8170 or cemetery@sidneyoh.com.

While these rules are not new and are equal to those in place for other public cemeteries, the enforcement has been lax during the recent personnel changes. In these times of financial challenges and reduced staffing, the cemetery operations need to be as efficient as possible. The mowing and maintenance of the 36 acres at the cemetery is very time consuming and leaves very little time for the crew to move the mementoes in order to trim around each grave. In some cases, if these items are not noticed, they can become projectiles and cause injury to the workers, visitor and or owners. The public's assistance in following the guidelines is appreciated. The City staff and the visitors share the same goal of keeping the grounds safe and respectful looking to honor our loved ones.

A complete copy of the Cemetery Ordinance (Ord. 921) can be obtained from the City, the office at Graceland and on the City website, www.sidneyoh.com/cemetery