

Coachella Valley Public Cemetery District
Board of Trustee Meeting Minutes
Friday, April 10, 2026
8:00 a.m.

A meeting of the Governing Board of the Coachella Valley Public Cemetery District (“District”) was held at the Coachella Valley Public Cemetery District Executive Building at 44801 Village Ct., Suite 104, Palm Desert, CA 92260 on Friday, April 10, 2026, at 8:00 a.m.

Public Notices were posted by the Clerk of the Board on Monday, April 6, 2026, at the following locations:

1. CVPCD Administrative Office – 82895 Avenue 52, Coachella, CA 92236
2. CVPCD Executive Office – 44801 Village Ct., Suite 104, Palm Desert, CA 92260
3. The CVPCD website – <http://coachellacemetery.org>

Chair Ernesto Rosales called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m., those in attendance were as follows:

Trustees present:

Ernesto Rosales, Chair
Judy Vossler, Vice Chair
Bruce Underwood, Trustee
Marcos Coronel, Trustee

One Board seat was vacant due to the passing of Trustee John Rios.

Additional participants:

Josh Bonner, General Manager
Sherry Winder, Finance Manager/Clerk of the Board
Carlos Campos, General Counsel
Tony Thrasher, Willdan Financial Services (*via Zoom*)

Additional participants for Public Comment:

Rita Barajas of Indio, CA addressed the Board regarding Item 3.1.

FLAG SALUTE

MOMENT OF SILENCE

PUBLIC COMMENT

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

1. PRESENTATIONS

1.1 Presentation by Tony Thrasher, Willdan Financial

2026 fee study results and summary

Tony Thrasher of Willdan Financial presented the 2026 User Fee Study and noted that development and capital costs may outpace revenue and investments over time. He provided options to phase in or adjust fee increases to reduce the impact of larger increases.

The Board requested a clearer breakdown of cost components and percentages. GM Bonner confirmed staff will incorporate these items into the final presentation and noted fee studies also help staff identify efficiencies and opportunities to mitigate future fee increases.

2. CONSENT CALENDAR

2.1 Trustee Minutes

- a. Board Meeting – March 13, 2026

2.2 Finance and Administration

- a. Approval of Expenditures – Checks and ACH transactions as detailed (March 2026)
- b. Investment Report (March 2026)
- c. Budget to Actual (March 2026)

2.3 Decommission of Surplus Capital Item

Authorization to dispose of equipment

Staff Recommendation: *Approve the declaration of the New Holland T1510 RWD Tractor as surplus and authorize its disposal via public auction.*

Financial Analysis: *The District does not have a current estimate of the resale value of the unit. Proceeds, if any, will be determined through the public auction process. There is no direct cost to the District associated with disposal through an online auction platform. Any revenue generated will be returned to the District.*

This unit is not schedule for immediate replacement. Options for replacement will be evaluated and presented as part of the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 capital budget process.

2.4 Approval of Preferred Vendor List

Additions to existing preferred vendor list

Staff Recommendation: *Approve the Preferred Vendor List as presented and authorize staff to utilize the listed vendors in accordance with the District's Purchasing and Contracting Policy through October 2027.*

Financial Analysis: *Approval of the Preferred Vendor List does not authorize any specific expenditure. All purchases will remain subject to budget appropriations and approval authority thresholds established in the District's Purchasing and Contracting Policy.*

This action is intended to improve administrative efficiency and ensure compliance with procurement requirements for recurring and specialized services.

2.5 Adoption of Updated Salary Schedule

New schedule to reflect previously approved change to General Manager salary

Staff Recommendation: *Adopt the updated Salary Schedule reflecting the General Manager's annual salary of \$211,000, effective February 13, 2026. The revised Salary Schedule is attached as Exhibit A, with no other modifications.*

Financial Analysis: *No fiscal impact. This action formalizes a previously approved compensation change.*

Motion: Coronel – Move approval with Item 2.4 pulled

Second: Underwood

Yes: Rosales, Vossler, Coronel, Underwood

Abstain: None

No: None

Absent: None

Vacant: One Board seat

Motion passed.

Due to being pulled from the Consent Calendar, Item 2.4 was moved to Action Items as Item 3.2.

3. ACTION ITEMS

3.1 Consideration of Expanded Tuition Reimbursement Program

Application of education policy to additional employees

Staff Recommendation: *Approve an amendment to the District's Education Policy to expand tuition reimbursement eligibility to regular full-time employees and establish an annual reimbursement cap of \$7,500 per employee, subject to budget appropriation and administrative guidelines.*

Financial Analysis: *The fiscal impact of the proposed tuition reimbursement program is currently indeterminate, as the District does not have historical data regarding employee participation in a broad-based education assistance program.*

The proposed program would apply to approximately 11 eligible full-time employees. At the established annual cap of \$7,500 per employee, the maximum potential annual exposure would be \$82,500 if all eligible employees fully utilized the benefit. It is important to note that full participation at the maximum level is unlikely. Actual program costs will depend on employee interest, program enrollment, and successful course completion. Based on typical utilization patterns in similar programs, participation is expected to be limited and variable.

Given the District's size and the capped structure of the program, the overall financial impact is anticipated to be manageable within the context of the District's operating budget and subject to annual appropriation by the Board.

Discussion: GM Bonner reviewed key stipulations of the Employee Tuition Reimbursement Policy, noting that the Board retains budgetary control and may revise or suspend the program if needed. GM Bonner clarified the benefit is reimbursement-based and contingent on successful course completion.

Board discussion ensued, and the Board requested the policy be brought back with the following revisions: require completion of a 180-day probationary period for eligibility, add a \$30,000 lifetime cap in addition to an annual limit, and include prorated eligibility for part-time employees.

Motion: Underwood – Move approval

Second: Vossler

Following discussion, no vote was taken and the motion was not acted upon, as additional revisions were needed before approval.

3.2 Approval of Preferred Vendor List

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Financial Analysis: *Approval of the Preferred Vendor List does not authorize any specific expenditure. All purchases will remain subject to budget appropriations and approval authority thresholds established in the District's Purchasing and Contracting Policy.*

This action is intended to improve administrative efficiency and ensure compliance with procurement requirements for recurring and specialized services.

Discussion: GM Bonner reviewed that the purchasing policy requires approval for purchases over \$5,000 and noted it is unclear whether the threshold applies per purchase or cumulatively over the year. GM Bonner stated a preferred vendor list would simplify review for vendors with single large purchases or recurring purchases that exceed \$5,000 over the year.

The Board noted this is a standard public agency practice and questioned the fountain service vendor and the Card Member Services. GM Bonner noted the fountain vendor has long-standing knowledge of the District and, at approximately \$5,000 per year, it was in the District's best interest to continue the service, while noting it could be competitively bid if needed. Finance Manager Winder clarified the Card Member Services should not have been included as it reflects total District business credit card charges across multiple vendors.

Motion: Coronel – Move approval

Second: Underwood

Yes: Rosales, Vossler, Coronel, Underwood

Abstain: None

No: None

Absent: None

Vacant: One Board seat

Motion passed.

4. INFORMATION ITEMS

4.1 Disinterment Procedures and Funeral Home Coordination

Policy considerations to ensure required support

GM Bonner reviewed disinterment procedures, and Cemetery Services Manager Navarro-Lupian described a recent disinterment where the funeral home did not arrive as scheduled despite an appointment and reminder. GM Bonner noted staff proceeded only because no issues were encountered, but stated complications could have delayed the service and resulted in additional opening and closing charges for the family. The Board noted the funeral home is the only party authorized to handle human remains and serves as the family's witness.

Board Direction: Staff to consult with Counsel Campos and return to the Board with a proposed funeral home disinterment deposit requirement and a disclaimer for families.

4.2 Trustee Benefit Options

Follow-up on potential 457 savings plan

GM Bonner reviewed the Board's request to explore no-cost Trustee benefits and stated the only potential option was a CalPERS 457 plan, which would require adding Trustees to payroll. The Board stated it did not want to add to staff workload, thanked staff for the review, and took no action.

4.3 Irrigation System Performance and Ongoing Evaluation

Steps being taken to diagnose and repair line breaks

GM Bonner noted irrigation issues were identified during the landscaping contract review, including pumps activating multiple systems at once and an automated setup the system was not designed to support. GM Bonner stated Southwest Landscape and a second company will complete assessments to document findings and determine next steps.

4.4 Standard Operating Procedures and Internal Controls

Development of needed documentation and policy proposals

GM Bonner reported a need to document SOPs, policies, and procedures for the Finance and Cemetery Services Teams. GM Bonner stated staff are performing the work effectively, but the processes are not formalized in writing, and developing a manual requires time and specialized training. GM Bonner presented a \$12,600 proposal to complete documentation for both teams and noted it will support compliance, including audit and HR needs. The Board expressed support for moving forward.

4.5 Shutter Engraving Procedures

Reducing agency workload and expanding constituent choice

GM Bonner noted the fee study identified significant staff time spent on the current shutter engraving process. Cemetery Services Manager Navarro-Lupian stated the current process requires extensive back-and-forth with families and the vendor. The Board encouraged reviewing other District processes to avoid subsidizing industry costs through staff time.

Board Direction: Shift the shutter engraving process to a headstone-style model in which families work directly with an engraver from the district's preferred vendor list. GM Bonner stated he will review the policy and return with any needed language changes or implement the change immediately if current policy already allows it.

5. COMMITTEE UPDATES

5.1 LAFCO MSR Ad Hoc Committee

Trustee Underwood reported the LAFCO MSR Committee has not met. Counsel Campos stated the CEQA exemption has been confirmed, but other required contacts have been on leave; once they return, the committee will be able to meet.

6. TRUSTEE/GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS

6.1 Trustee Comments and Event/Function Report Out

Chair Rosales reported attending the CAPC Annual Meeting, including the golf tournament, and stated the current CAPC staff have done a good job. Chair Rosales noted he missed the ribbon cutting and thanked staff for their work on the event.

Vice Chair Vossler congratulated staff on the ribbon cutting and noted the social media, press releases, and photos were effective, resulting in multiple inquiries about the cemetery. Vice Chair Vossler reported attending two GCVCC Board meetings and stated they have been informative.

Trustee Coronel noted Government Finance Professionals Week was the last week of March and stated he, Trustee Underwood, and GM Bonner took the Finance team to lunch in recognition of their work, noting public trust starts with strong finances. Trustee Coronel reported attending the Palm Desert office ribbon cutting and a Riverside County CSDA forum for LAFCO candidates where comments were made about local cemetery districts' finances; Trustee Coronel stated CVPCD is financially stable, and GM Bonner noted the neighboring cemetery is also. Trustee Coronel requested discussion on future development, which GM Bonner noted will be a focus of the May Planning Session. Trustee Coronel inquired about the monthly inspection form from the landscaping vendor, and GM Bonner stated it has not been received despite requests and noted the contractor's equipment remains stored in the District warehouse. Trustee Coronel requested the landscaping contractor attend the next Board meeting, and Board support was indicated for the request. Trustee Coronel emphasized the importance of public engagement and noted this was his first meeting since the passing of Trustee John Rios, and he thanked Trustee John Rios for his service.

Trustee Underwood reported attending the CAPC Annual Meeting and stated he found it valuable, noting he learns more through informal conversations than in sessions. Trustee Underwood reported meeting with vendors and expressed interest in exploring borrowing to reduce pension liabilities and evaluating an approach that could lower costs for seed, fertilizer, and water. Trustee Underwood commended staff for the strong turnout at the Palm Desert office ribbon cutting and reported attending the GCVCC Legislative Breakfast, the Indian Wells State of the City, and Legislative Days, where he learned CSDA plans to oppose two AI-related bills to protect labor and met with Senator Ochoa Bogh, Assemblymember Greg Wallis, and Assemblymember Jeff Gonzalez, who encouraged districts to support other organizations statewide when appropriate. Trustee Underwood also reported speaking with Chad Mayes. Trustee Underwood emphasized continued community engagement and responsible use of District finances, and recommended all Trustees attend the CSDA Annual Conference in Palm Desert in August, with staff attending for at least one day. GM Bonner noted all staff attended when the conference was previously held locally.

6.2 General Manager Update

GM Bonner reported new website analytics showing over 49,000 page views last month and noted positive feedback on the one-day mowing schedule. GM Bonner also reported an incident involving the fence on Jackson Street, a transition from Frontier to Verizon, the start of summer hours, and successful recent events including the check presentation and ribbon cutting. GM Bonner noted SDRMA presented a safety award related to the headstone lift, which he and Maintenance Supervisor Wilberts attended, and referenced a recent CSDA magazine article by Trustees Coronel and Underwood.

Meeting was adjourned to closed session at 9:45 a.m.

7. CLOSED SESSION ITEMS

7.1 CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL – ANTICIPATED LITIGATION

Significant Exposure to Litigation, Pursuant to Government Code Section
54956.9(d)(2)/(e)(1) One (1) Potential Case

7.2 PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Title: General Manager

Meeting resumed from closed session at 10:11 a.m.

Counsel Campos reported received direction, no reportable action.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 10:12 a.m.

NEXT MEETING TIME, DATE AND LOCATION

Friday, May 8, 2026

8:00 a.m.

Coachella Valley Public Cemetery District Executive Office

44801 Village Ct., Suite 104

Palm Desert, CA 92260

Respectfully Submitted,
Sherry Winder
Clerk of the Board

Approved: _____ BOT Mtg.