

Minutes of the advisory committee meeting of
THE JEWISH CEMETERY AT MOUNTAIN VIEW
Held at 1788 West 5th Avenue, Vancouver, British Columbia
May 22, 2013 at 5:30 pm

Present:

Executive Committee:

Shirley Barnett, Chair

Advisory Committee:

Earl Lesk

Lani Levine

Rosemarie Newall

Wendy Oberlander

Bill Pechet

Jennifer Standevan

Ronnie Tessler

Staff: Linda Tenenbaum

Regrets:

Ret. Maj-Gen Ed Fitch

Dr. Richard Menkis

Cyril Leonoff

Arnold Silber

Herb Silber

Rabbi Yosef Wosk

Robin Naiman

Diane Switzer

Shirley Barnett took the Chair and called the Meeting to order.

Linda Tenenbaum as project coordinator was introduced

Updates and Next steps:

Research & Documentation of Land & Ownership of unused plots

Jennifer Standevan looked into past city council meetings as well as city and cemetery archives to gather information.

Re: Land use:

- In 1949 there was correspondence about the burial of Mrs. Rosina Ginzberger, who

was Jewish , buried by the City in the Jewish Section at her request but without Jewish burial rites.

- Correspondence dating back to March 1986 re the purchase of 76 plots that indicated deposits were paid and that full payment would be received when graves were used. Likely not done. No further records of payments.
- There are no records of any kind stating that this land was established as a "reserved" section for Jewish graves and consecrated as such.

Next Steps:

City of Vancouver legal Dept & Cemetery Board lawyer to undertake some sort of letter of understanding ensuring this reserved section consecrated in 18?? is for Jewish burial in perpetuity

Re Unused plots:

Cemetery owner (City of Vancouver) can advertise and has done so for families to claim plots, and if after 40 years there is no use or contact with the owner (City of Vancouver) can claim unused plots to re-sell. The plots (since law passed in 2004) cannot be sold by the owner to a third party. Mountain View has been trying to establish family contacts with empty Jewish plots to establish ownership. They do not automatically revert back to the Schara Tzedek unless they were part of the 76 purchased in 1986.

All of this needs to be sorted out between Mountain View and the Schara Tzedek Cemetery Board, not this restoration project. Shirley Barnett to set up meetings on this topic. Goal would be to have a letter transferring empty unclaimed plots to the Schara Tzedek for nominal amount.

Research & Documentation of burials

Shirley gave update.

- Schara Tzedek does not have records prior to 1926, (or 1927 or 1929 according to Justin at the cemetery office)
- Shirley and Linda have gone through the two large ancient ledgers at Mountain View along with Ada Greene's data and Mountain View's data base to combine info in one place.

Physical Restoration

Bill Pechet gave update on behalf of Design Committee.

- See committee report (attached)
- Discussion on possibility of doing new fence, benches, etc.
- Need to be careful of monuments in hedge and gravesites; be careful not to undermine the sites; may need an arborist for consultation.
- Bill will talk to Cornelia Oberlander.

- The hedge is mostly cedar with a few yews.
- Original fence footings can be seen in photos.
- Discussion on asphalt surface road, changing part of it to cobblestones.
- Information about fence.....does it have to be the way it was or something completely different? Does it have to be returned to its historical style?

Discussion ensued:

- Jennifer talked about financial plan. Mountain View may have thought about use for area just adjacent to the Jewish section (in front of east side) for possible burial of ashes? (This would not be desirable from Jewish point of view)
- Sloped grass area could be used for something; perhaps something Jewish.
- Schara Tzedek does not have an expansion plan but would be pleased to gain a few feet where possible for wider fencing area.
- Lani suggested that expansion could be part of a plan.

Next Steps:

- To determine maximum perimeter of land? Were the hedges arbitrary? There is no documentation as to when perimeter fence went up; no paperwork. Need a site plan and survey done to know what are the perimeters.
- Jennifer will look at maps and then will get together with Bill. Can we increase area? Bill and Jennifer will see about a surveyor.
- Tell Shirley first as Dayhu may have a company it deals with to do the land survey
- Need to look at graves on other side of bush. Maybe there are Jewish names outside, eg. Jews buried there due to suicide.
- Wendy brought up view from west side of area. How much privacy do we want to preserve? Enclosure creates a unique space. How important is that? Committee members should check this out....what is unique, difficult, special about this. Wendy will do a small questionnaire that committee can use for a follow-up field trip.

Rosemarie Newall gave her update.

- She passed out photos of "curbing". Some curbing is granite and some is concrete. There were some "grave coverings that have now been removed". Family names are carved into curbing. When cleaned and restored, granite will come out beautifully.
- Need to uncover curbing – City's/ Cemetery's responsibility. Jennifer confirms this. According to Jennifer, Mountain View generally does the basics like trimming grass, unless family requests more work.
- There may be graves within the pathway; not sure.
- Need to get an estimate for uncovering curbing from Dennis. The concrete curbing may have sunk further than granite curbing. Rosemarie described construction of curbing, which often includes artwork and family names .
- Dennis will meet with Rosemarie.

Headstones and Temporary markers

- Stone restoration is a huge job cost of which we hope will be partly covered by Heritage Legacy Fund of BC grant. We will know at end of May if we received grant.
- Grant for \$25,000 which covers about half of cost of restoration of 55 monuments.
- Warm weather project to be done over 3 years.
- Shirley's idea is to begin to contact families regarding stones to determine their level of interest.
- Linda will continue with research.
- What about the 150 graves which are unmarked? We may be able to raise money to put headstones on these graves.
- We are exploring the placement of temporary metal markers on these graves. Two samples of these were displayed. Maybe have media coverage for this. This is acceptable to Mountain View and the Schara Tzedek. Also Linda to check with Joseph Marciano and Justin to see if an attempt first has to be made to contact families who may in fact not want a marker.
- Justin at Schara Tzedek Cemetery office said markers cannot be put on graves without permission of a family member. Jennifer will also look into the legal process for this (Consumer Protection).
- Jennifer mentioned that in the Veteran's area someone occasionally will come forward to make a donation to do this.

Community Outreach

- See report
- Name of project was discussed; Shirley doesn't like use of the word "Pioneer" and explained her feelings. Also mentioned that this committee does not have the right to name the cemetery. It will thus be continued to be known as the Jewish Cemetery at Mountain View.
- Placement of ad in Jewish Independent to get information from public.
- This committee is compiling list of people who contact them. For example, Lani talked to Fred Schwartz who was a fount of information. She will interview him at a later date.
- Where will all this information go? It should be on one data base, in one location, like the Jewish Historical Society.
- Discrepancies should be included in this information base.
- What is the legacy on the ground and as a communal space? There are many layers here.
- Lani and Wendy will talk to Jennifer at Historical society to create a framework.

General Community Awareness

Ronnie Tessler gave an update

- She went into archives and looked at photos. She is meeting with Linda and Michael Schwartz next week to plan display case cabinets.
- Maybe we can use display in other places like the Schara Tzedek

- Discussion on materials to be used in display, eg. foam core or vinyl panels.

Budget & Funding Plans

- Letter from Jewish community foundation re grant was read. We received \$20,000 over two year period. The first installment being June 2013.
- Bank account is open and to date \$45,000 is in account
- This is to cover costs of Linda as well as additional staff time at the Jewish Historical Society.
- We should try to raise \$100,000 dollars first and then go to families/descendants and then private donor community

It was discussed that the timing of this project is of our own making.
We will decide when next meeting will be held, based on need.

Meeting ended at 7:30.