

Hello Mr. Mayor, Council members, City Mgr., Historic Preservation Officer and PARD staff.

I am writing to you today about the neglect of Oakwood Cemetery. I may not be a wordsmith when it comes to writing a letter, but I am the most passionate cemetery preservationist you will meet while in office. I like you work for the citizens of Austin. I am a 19-year veteran of the Austin Fire Department, having the unique schedule of working 24 hrs at the station and 48 hrs off, I have for several years been involved in cemetery preservation in Travis County.

I became involved with Oakwood in 2002 after a storm felled several trees and did significant damage. After several meetings with PARD I formed the Non Profit, Save Austin's Cemeteries to better document the site and assist in developing a master plan that is required for grant applications.

The current contract for cemetery maintenance at all five of the cities cemeteries is up for renewal. If this item has not yet come across your desk it soon will. The membership of Save Austin's Cemeteries is very concerned that the old contract was verbally amended, allowing the contractor to reassign the onsite supervisor (one of his employees) from Oakwood Cemetery to Austin Memorial Park. This action left 40 + acres of historic burial grounds unattended, with no one onsite M-F, there was an increase in theft and vandalism.

In March of this year a 43-year-old male, over the course of 4 weeks looted the site of antique Iron fencing. Coming and going without being questioned by anyone. 16 family lots (that we know of) were affected, one within 15 feet of the office were the staff member used to work. Due to the actions taken by Save Austin's Cemeteries, the thief was caught and some of the fencing and grave goods were recovered at a local antique store. The replacement cost of the recovered Iron fencing is over \$100,000.00. Even after the theft was reported PARD staff maintained that "the full-time staffing of an employee at Oakwood was not required because it was felt that it would be more beneficial to overall City cemetery operations to have them work elsewhere."

As the policy makers for the city, you have the chance to reduce if not stop the pilfering of our historic burial grounds. Make the call and direct the contract administrator to re assign the employee back at Oakwood.

Assistant City Attorney Raul Calderon tells me:

"Our contract administrators continually make decisions on how to best administer the myriad terms and provisions of these agreements. In the course of an agreement's performance by the parties, modifications or changes may be effectuated through formal amendments, letter amendments or even oral agreements, all which are legally permissible."

If the contract has already been written and is out for bid, then please review it to see if the staff position for Oakwood is still included. If as I assume, the staff at PARD has removed that position from the upcoming contract, then lets start the talks to insure that that position is re-instated, and this service is included in the upcoming contract.

I will make my self-available you any of you or your staff, on or off duty to discuss this important issue.

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BCC: Save Austin's Cemeteries members, volunteers and plot owners