

City of Sonoma Cemeteries

Don't Bury Your Problems

SUMMARY

The City of Sonoma (Sonoma or City) owns and manages three cemeteries, Mountain, Valley, and Veterans as the Cemetery Enterprise Fund. An enterprise fund operates like a business and is expected to be self-supporting and not subsidized by government funds. The public is eligible to purchase land, tangible items and services from the cemeteries and the City is expected to maintain the cemeteries using revenue from the sales of tangible items and services, crypts, niches, burial plots, and their associated endowment fees. There are no in-ground burial plots available to purchase at any of the cemeteries, only niches and crypts. The tangible items sold by the cemeteries are burial liners, precast concrete bases for markers, ring and vase sets, plastic vases, and niche or crypt porcelain memorial photos. Endowment fees are charged at the time of purchase of a plot, niche, or crypt and are held in the Cemetery Endowment Fund to ensure that income will always be available for maintenance and upkeep of the cemetery. The City Council sets the rates for endowment fees.

This investigation was self-initiated by the 2022-2023 Civil Grand Jury. Early in the investigation it became evident that there are several serious problems facing the Cemetery Program in addition to uncollected sales tax and undercharging of services.

The Grand Jury investigation determined that the City of Sonoma is not assessing, reporting, collecting, or paying sales tax on cemetery tangible items (e.g., burial liners, bronze ring and vase sets, concrete bases for markers, and memorial photographs for niche plates) sold to the public. Additionally, we found that one of the tangible items sold most frequently is the ring and vase set. The cemeteries have been charging less than wholesale cost for this item since 2019. In the matter of undercharging for cemetery services, the Grand Jury determined that the most common service offered, lettering services for crypt and niche plates, is undercharged by \$2 per character.

The Grand Jury has determined that the Cemetery Enterprise Fund is losing money due, in part, to numerous management problems. There is no dedicated manager of operations, only a .15 Full-time Equivalent (FTE) Human Resources Manager allocated for oversight of administrative activities. The Cemetery Program does not have a policies and procedures manual or training program. We could find no evidence of regular audits of finances or performance reviews for staff. In the absence of annual pricing reviews of wholesale costs for items sold at the cemeteries; items are being sold at prices less than their cost which leads to a loss of revenue. There appears to be no marketing plan in place including no schedule of fees on the City website nor printed materials available to the public.

There have been two studies of the Cemetery Program in the past 18 years, one in 2005 (RJM report) and one in 2022 (Goodnoe report). Both studies emphasized the need to manage the operations more efficiently and called for: a dedicated manager for the program, an upgrade to the financial software to improve record-keeping and sales management, upgrading marketing materials, creating a dedicated website, and implementing operational training for staff. The Grand Jury found that the cemeteries do not have focused resources as outlined in these

studies and recommends that the City conduct a thorough operational and financial analysis of the Cemetery Program, including the Endowment Fund.

The Grand Jury is recommending that the City of Sonoma rectify their sales tax problem by contacting the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration (CDTFA) immediately. In addition to this, the City should conduct a thorough financial and operational analysis of the Cemetery Program.

The Cemetery Endowment Fund was established in 1974 to ensure that funds will always be available to maintain the cemetery properties, even after all interment spaces are sold. When a plot, niche, or crypt is sold, endowment fees are collected. The current Cemetery Endowment Fund balance is approximately \$750,000 and \$50,000 is transferred annually from the fund to the Cemetery Enterprise Fund to cover the costs of maintenance. As the cemeteries have been built out and now only sell a limited number of crypts and niches that are subject to endowment fees, the diminishing Endowment Fund is a serious issue. With the limited ability to collect fees for the Endowment Fund, it will eventually be depleted.

In addition to diminishing endowment fees, the Endowment Fund, that is supposed to be invested to generate interest income for the maintenance of the cemeteries, does not show any investment income. The Grand Jury recommends that the City conduct a thorough review of the Endowment Fund, its requirements as established as well as its investment.

GLOSSARY

- **CDTFA:** California Department of Tax and Fee Administration, state agency collecting sales tax from retail businesses.
- **Crypt:** Type of burial chamber, usually made of stone or concrete, that is used to store the remains of the deceased. It is typically located underground and is often sealed with a heavy stone lid.
- **Endowment Fund:** Endowment fees are placed in trust by cemeteries to generate income to cover cemetery maintenance in perpetuity.
- **Enterprise Fund:** A self-supporting government fund that sells goods and services to the public for a fee.
- **FTE:** Full-time Equivalent. When an employee has a 40-hour workweek, they are a 1.0 FTE. If an employee's position is allocated equally between two departments, it is expressed as .50 FTE to one department and .50 FTE to another.
- **Interment:** The place where a person is laid to rest permanently whether buried or cremated.
- **Linens:** A concrete reinforced container for a casket to prevent ground from caving in over time.
- **Niche:** Small space, usually in a wall, where an urn containing cremated remains can be placed.
- **Ring and vase set:** Bronze ring and vase, usually inscribed.

- **Tangible Items:** Personal property that can be seen, weighed, measured, felt, or touched.

BACKGROUND

Sonoma’s Cemetery Program operates as the Cemetery Enterprise Fund. Cemeteries were transitioned to an enterprise fund sometime in the 1990s. Enterprise funds are supposed to be self-sustaining from the sale of burial plots, niches, crypts, tangible items, and services sold. In 1974, an endowment fund was established for the perpetual care of the cemeteries’ grounds. The three cemetery properties are maintained by the Public Works Department. There is one administrative assistant who works .50 FTE for the cemeteries and .50 FTE for the City Council. The administrative assistant interfaces with the public, taking pre-need orders, writing up sales receipts and interfacing with the vendors who provide tangible items and services to the cemeteries. It must be noted that the City’s job description for the position of administrative assistant states that the staff person “receives general supervision from a department manager” however, there is no department manager for the cemeteries. Rather, the Human Resources Manager is assigned the responsibility for overseeing administrative activities of the cemeteries with .15 FTE.

When the Grand Jury requested a copy of a policies and procedures manual for the cemeteries, we were provided with a 47-page compilation of copied documents. There are no dates on any of these pages, and it appears that they are very outdated as the examples provided of actual sales receipts are all dated 2010. None of these sales receipt forms have changed since then; they do not have line items for assessing sales tax. This evidence suggests that the City has not assessed, collected, or paid sales tax for at least 13 years and presumably longer. Further, Sonoma’s most recent State, Local, and District Sales and Use Tax Return submitted to the CDTFA for 2022 reflects that the cemeteries collected payments for many sales of tangible items and services, but did not assess, collect, report, or remit any sales tax on tangible items for that year. Another document references the procedures for selling burial plots; the RJM report from 2005 lists 122 burial plots available for sale. That inventory was exhausted many years ago. Clearly, the Cemetery Program has not developed a comprehensive policies and procedures manual that is updated when procedures or costs change.

METHODOLOGY

This investigation was self-initiated by the Civil Grand Jury. From the onset of this investigation, the Grand Jury struggled to secure interviews with the staff associated with the Cemetery Program. The position of city manager has been in flux for several years and during this investigation, there have been three different acting or interim city managers. This April, the City hired a new permanent city manager.

The Grand Jury ultimately interviewed four people from the City: three staff members and a member of the City Council. The City provided most of the documents we requested: Budget Book for 2021-2022, two studies of the cemeteries (2005 and 2022), copies of sales receipts and purchase invoices, a June 30, 2018, audit report of the City’s finances, and a CDTFA sales tax return for 2022. In response to our request for the Cemetery Program policies and procedures manual, we received 47 pages of sample forms dated 2010, cemetery maps and

instructional pages with strikeouts and handwritten notations; presumably these pages have provided direction to the administrative assistant.

The Grand Jury researched California cemeteries and cemetery districts to determine if any of the Sonoma cemeteries are exempt from sales tax and determined that they are not, confirmed by the CDTFA. The CDTFA clearly describes the recommended practice for invoicing cemetery sales to separate services from tangible items that are subject to sales tax. It provides a sample invoice that itemizes the sale by taxable and nontaxable items as well as fees.

Funeral director's invoice to client:

Charges:	Amount:
Maple Casket (t)	2,895.00
Additional Copies of Life Tribute DVD (t) (\$25/ea. x 10)	250.00
Total of Items Subject to Tax	\$3,145.00
Traditional Chapel Burial Package	\$4,945.00
Fees for Cash Advance items:	Amount:
County filing fee	12.00
Certified copy of Death Certificate	21.00
Organist	225.00
Total Fees	\$258.00
Total Nontaxable	\$5,203.00
Total Taxable	\$3,145.00
Sales Tax (\$3,145.00) x 8.25%	259.46
Grand Total	\$8,607.46

(t) = Tangible personal property

Source: CDTFA sample invoice, Regulation 1505

DISCUSSION

The Mountain Cemetery is 60 acres and was built in 1841. This cemetery has historic significance as early settlers of the area are buried there, dating back to when General Mariano Vallejo founded the town of Sonoma in 1844. The Veterans' Cemetery is only one acre and was acquired in 1960. The Valley Cemetery was founded in 1835 and was originally two acres. It expanded in 1960 to include another two acres that are referred to as the Valley Annex.

The cemeteries provide tangible items such as liners, ring and vase sets, concrete bases for markers, and memorial photographs for niche plates. Under the CDTFA regulations all tangible items that are sold at cemeteries are subject to sales tax.

The Grand Jury found that the Cemetery Program has several serious problems. It is limited in its ability to sell goods and services due to the scarcity of available plots, crypts, and niches. In 1974 the Cemetery Endowment Fund was established to provide perpetual care of the cemeteries' grounds. Endowment funds, held in escrow, are invested to ensure that there will be adequate monies for maintenance of interment, entombment, and inurnment sites. With a steady decrease in cemetery revenues and inadequate return on the invested endowment funds, the City Council approved, in 2016, the transfer of \$50,000 from the Cemetery Endowment Fund to the Cemetery Enterprise Fund. The city manager recommends the

amount, and the City Council approves it. Every year since 2016, \$50,000 has been transferred. Prior to 2016, budgets do not reference the Cemetery Endowment Fund. At this rate, if the cemeteries do not improve revenues, the Endowment Fund will eventually be depleted. The California Funeral and Cemetery Bureau site provides this citation that highlights the importance of generating endowment care fees and sales revenue to support the maintenance of the cemetery.

(g) The amount collected by the cemetery in endowment care fees under Health and Safety Code Section 8738 shall be reconsidered annually by the cemetery based upon current and projected maintenance expenditures, and adjusted as necessary to ensure that sufficient funds are available to perform the maintenance required by their rules and regulations as described in subdivision (a) or subdivision (b) of this Section if subdivision (a) is not applicable.

The Problem of Unheeded Analyses of Cemetery Operations

Twice in the past 18 years, the City has contracted for studies of the cemeteries. In 2005, the RJM Design Group (RJM) was engaged by the Public Works Department to analyze the financial and operational practices of the cemeteries and make recommendations for an action plan. They conducted a three-month study, City of Sonoma Action Plan for City Cemeteries, and reported the pros and cons of the Cemetery Program in July 2005:

Pros

Reasonable maintenance budget exists
Provides a service to the community
Cemeteries are historic resources

Cons

Not enough interment products
Not enough variety of products
Inadequate Endowment Fund

RJM's action plan identified four options for the cemeteries at that time:

1. Terminate cemetery operations as a business center and perform only maintenance.
2. Sell the cemeteries to a private operator.
3. Terminate operations and sell the undeveloped property.
4. Continue providing services in such a way that lessens the financial burden on the City's general fund.

The fourth option was presented as the suggested alternative with the focus primarily on increasing burial options. Cemetery operations were mentioned as part of the plan to increase services, including the appointment of a cemetery manager and adequate staff for both operations and maintenance of facilities.

In 2007, the City Council conducted a study session on the action plan that arose from the RJM Master Plan. At a City Council meeting, the council reviewed proposed plans and programs for operation of the cemeteries. RJM gave a PowerPoint presentation refresher on the plan that focused on several goals to implement option four:

- Recover costs.
- Increase the endowment.
- Invest in modest construction improvements.

- Implement a marketing campaign.
- Increase the number of products.
- Assess pricing annually to assure correct economics.
- Conduct an outside review of conditions biannually to ensure operations are reviewed, recommendations are working, and adjustments can be made as needed.

It is unclear if the City attempted to implement any of the proposed actions for option four, or any other of the options, after this study session. The City appears to have shifted towards retaining the cemeteries and recently sought further analysis on how to improve revenues. In 2022, the City Council contracted with Jack Goodnoe of Cemetery Planning and Design to conduct a planning study, City of Sonoma Cemeteries Planning Study, of the operations and facilities to identify opportunities for increasing inventory of burial options. Recommendations focused on shifting towards cremation and other interment options due to the lack of space at the cemeteries. The report did not include a financial analysis or analysis of cemetery operations, however, it did call out action items to improve cemetery operations:

- Create separate cemetery department with full-time staff.
- Upgrade cemetery software to fully digitize record-keeping and sales contract management.
- Upgrade marketing materials and develop new brochures/handouts for cemetery office.
- Develop an independent website for cemeteries.
- Establish training programs for inventory options, services, software and recordkeeping, and operational details of each cemetery.

At the time of the Grand Jury investigation of the cemeteries, none of these action items have been implemented, however the City of Sonoma 2022-2023 Budget Book lists the fiscal year goals: “Complete a financial analysis of the Cemetery Fund and develop a plan for resolution of the deficit in the Fund.”

Maintenance of the cemetery properties is under the direction of the Public Works Department. Financial responsibilities are under the city manager’s office and the finance department. The final responsibility of the cemetery operations, in the past, has fallen to the city manager. We were told that there is no policies and procedures manual for the cemeteries. During this investigation several individuals have served as acting or interim city manager and there appears to be a lack of organizational memory regarding cemetery operations.

The Grand Jury discovered, early in its investigation, that sales tax was not being assessed and that tangible items and services were being charged at prices less than their cost from vendors. The cemeteries provide:

- Niches and crypts.
- Porcelain memorial photos.
- Burial services.
- Burial liners.

- Precast concretes bases.
- Bronze rings and vase sets and plastic vases.
- Etched and bronze emblems.
- Stone engraving.

Some of these are taxable and others are not. Items that are taxable are burial liners, precast concrete bases for markers, vases with or without rings, and niche or crypt porcelain memorial photos. To process the orders for services, the City includes a flat administrative fee of \$75. Sonoma assesses different burial fee rates for city, county, and out-of-county customers. None of the aforementioned information is provided to the public on the City's website or by a published schedule of fees.

In researching sales tax collection and undercharging for tangible items, we found that the organizational memory has been significantly weakened by the reassignment of staff to positions that are frequently vacated by termination or resignation. The Cemetery Program staff, one person working part time, does not report directly to a manager overseeing cemetery operations. Oversight of operations, including sales, sales tax, pricing, forms, brochures, and website information appears to be nonexistent.

In reviewing the two cemetery studies from 2005 and 2022, the Grand Jury determined that the City of Sonoma has been unable to implement any of the options or actions to effect an improvement in the financial stability of the Cemetery Enterprise Fund or the Endowment Fund. Considering the operations and management problems encountered in this investigation, both funds would be best served if the operations are improved before investing general funds to develop new burial options.

The Problem of Unassessed Sales Tax

Seeking information on the Sonoma cemeteries and the items and services they sell to the public; we were unable to locate any information on the website as the link to the cemetery brochure is a dead-end page. No staff member was able to produce a printed cemetery fee schedule. The Grand Jury interviewed several witnesses with direct knowledge of and responsibility for some of the operations of the cemeteries, specifically, sales, purchases, and accounting. The Grand Jury reviewed sales receipts as well as invoices from vendors who sell items and services to Sonoma for their cemeteries. City budgets and financial records were examined to understand the financial status and commitments of the cemeteries. Documents from the CDTFA were reviewed to better understand the tax obligations of the cemeteries as they pertained to their role as funeral and memorial dealers.

In reviewing many cemetery invoices from 2021 to present, we did not find any reference to taxable or nontaxable line items, nor was there a line item for sales tax. In reviewing Sonoma's most recent State, Local, and District Sales and Use Tax Return submitted to the CDTFA for 2022, the Grand Jury learned that the cemeteries collected payments for many sales of tangible items and services, but did not assess, collect, report, or remit any sales tax on tangible items for that year.

In our interviews with two City employees, we were told by one person that sales tax was built into the sales price whereas another employee stated that it is reported under Use Tax on the CDTFA return. Neither explanation could be verified. Neither explanation is the correct procedure for selling and reporting tangible items.

The Problem of Price Discrepancies

Business enterprises must make a profit on tangible items and services sold. This requires that pricing is set at a markup over the cost from a vendor to ensure that there is a profit.

The Grand Jury reviewed the cemetery sales invoices and the prices charged for the items they purchase from vendors. We also reviewed the invoices from the vendors with the prices charged to the cemeteries and we discovered major discrepancies in pricing of both a tangible item and a service:

- The City has been charging \$175 for a ring and vase set since 2019, however, the vendor has raised its price twice since then, to \$200 in 2021 and more recently to \$250 in 2022.
- The City has been charging \$13 per character for inscription on a crypt or niche plate, whereas the vendor has been charging \$15 per character.
 - To calculate the value of undercharging \$2 per character, we estimate an average of 30 characters per plate which is \$60 lost plus the revenue lost on each sale had it been marked up for retail sale.

An enterprise fund is expected to set their fee schedule to generate revenues that assist in sustaining the operations. Charging customers less than cost for these items and services must, presumably, be a gross oversight and unintentional.

The Problem of a Diminishing Endowment Fund

In 1974, the Endowment Fund was established for the perpetual care of the cemeteries' grounds. The California Health and Safety Code, Section 8736 states:

Ultimately, the intent of endowment care is to ensure privately-owned cemeteries are properly maintained, even after they have sold all of their interment spaces. State law defines endowment care as the following: Endowment care is a provision for the discharge of a duty due from the persons contributing to the persons interred and to be interred in the cemetery and a provision for the benefit and protection of the public by preserving and keeping cemeteries from becoming unkept and places of reproach and desolation in the communities in which they are situated.

As the cemeteries have been built out and only sell crypts and niches that are assessed with endowment fees, the diminishing Endowment Fund is an issue. If the Endowment Fund is depleted, the City of Sonoma will have to assume all operations and maintenance expenses. According to the RJM report in 2005, "endowment fees at the time of purchasing a plot or niche should, when invested by the Fund, generate enough interest to pay for ongoing maintenance, replacements, and permanent care needs for all cemetery physical improvement." At that time, RJM estimated that the necessary amount for the Endowment Fund should be \$10,000,000,

and assuming a 3% return on the invested funds, the interest would provide \$300,000 for perpetual care and maintenance. In reviewing the general ledger for 2021-2022, the Grand Jury could find only one item reporting interest income for the Endowment Fund, in the amount of \$120. A staff member confirmed that this amount is related to the interest on the fund's investment. The balance of the fund is approximately \$750,000 and at this insignificant rate of return, the fund is not sustainable for the future.

In 2016, the City began reporting the transfer of funds from the Endowment Fund to the Cemetery Operations Fund. According to staff, previous budgets did not reference the Cemetery Endowment Fund. This has continued every fiscal year since then. The city manager, with council approval, sets the annual amount to be transferred each fiscal year. As seen in the table below, each year \$50,000 has been transferred from the Endowment Fund to the Cemetery Fund.

Description	FY 19-20 Actuals*	FY 20-21 Actuals*	FY 21-22 Adopted Budget	FY 21-22 Amended Budget	FY 21-22 Projected Actuals*	FY 22-23 Proposed Budget
Transfer from Reserves	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other Revenues	\$ 41,201.00	\$ 39,367.00	\$ 40,500.00	\$ 40,500.00	\$ 37,691.00	\$ 40,500.00
Interest Revenue	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 120.00	\$ 120.00	\$ -	\$ 120.00
Total Revenue	\$ 41,201.00	\$ 39,367.00	\$ 40,620.00	\$ 40,620.00	\$ 37,691.00	\$ 40,620.00
Transfers	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ -	\$ 50,000.00
Total Expense	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ -	\$ 50,000.00
Excess/(Deficiency) of Revenue over Expense	\$ (8,799.00)	\$ (10,633.00)	\$ (9,380.00)	\$ (9,380.00)	\$ 37,691.00	\$ (9,380.00)
Beginning Fund Balance	\$ 775,506.00	\$ 766,707.00	\$ 756,074.00	\$ 756,074.00	\$ 756,074.00	\$ 793,765.00
Ending Fund Balance	\$ 766,707.00	\$ 756,074.00	\$ 746,694.00	\$ 746,694.00	\$ 793,765.00	\$ 784,385.00

* Unaudited

Source: City of Sonoma Operating and Capital Budget Fiscal Year 2022-23

RJM conducted an inventory of burial options at the cemeteries and determined that inventory was inadequate to ensure future care and maintenance. As shown below, a total of 653 interment sites were available in 2005, and that number has decreased significantly after 13 years. This lack of inventory, combined with the inadequate return on the Endowment Fund investment, puts the future of the cemeteries at risk.

TABLE 1 SONOMA CEMETERIES INVENTORY BY PRODUCT TYPE AND LOCATION				
	<u>Mountain Cemetery</u>	<u>Valley Cemetery</u>	<u>Veteran's Cemetery</u>	<u>Total</u>
Existing Available Inventory by Product Type (April 2005)				
Ground Burials	—	62	60	122
Earth Remains	96	172	163	431
Crypts	—	—	—	—
Niches/ Columbarium	22	48	—	70
Babyland	30	—	—	30
Total	148	282	223	653

Source: City of Sonoma Action Plan for City Cemeteries, RJM Design Group, Inc., 2005

CONCLUSION

The Grand Jury examined numerous documents and compared vendor invoices to the sales receipts issued to people who purchased tangible items and services sold by the cemeteries. The Grand Jury found that no sales tax was charged on any of the supplied invoices for tangible items. The only fees indicated on City of Sonoma sales invoices are a flat administrative service charge. The CDTFA states that tangible products sold are subject to sales tax. After reviewing Sonoma’s financial reports created by their software program, it does not appear that the City charges, reports, or remits sales tax for tangible cemetery sales.

Sonoma has three cemeteries that are not self-sustaining. The Endowment Fund has been financially supplementing the cemeteries since 2016. The general response from staff to questions regarding the cemeteries indicated that they are a service for the public and thus not there to make a large profit. This sentiment is admirable, but the reality is that maintenance costs have risen without an increase in fees. This lack of attention to accounting, pricing, and marketing has contributed to the need to subsidize the cemeteries from the Endowment Fund. Once this fund is depleted, the cemeteries’ maintenance will have to be subsidized by Sonoma and its taxpayers.

FINDINGS

The Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury determined that:

- F1. The City of Sonoma is seriously remiss in not charging, collecting, reporting, or paying sales tax on tangible items sold through the cemeteries, resulting in a liability for the City.
- F2. Responsibility for managing collection and payment of sales tax on cemeteries’ tangible items is not delegated to any staff member or department, which has contributed to the City’s failure to meet its responsibility to report and pay the sales tax obligation.

- F3. The cemeteries have been losing money for an undetermined number of years and the operating expenses must be subsidized annually by the Endowment Fund which is not invested to generate adequate income; \$50,000 has been transferred for each of the past seven years and presumably will continue, resulting in the eventual depletion of the Endowment Fund.
- F4. Sonoma is undercharging for lettering services and ring and vase sets, resulting in financial loss to the Cemetery Enterprise Fund.
- F5. The Cemetery Endowment Fund is shrinking since the cemeteries are nearly built out, therefore there are limited opportunities to assess endowment fees. The Fund does not appear to be invested based upon the financial statements.
- F6. Recently, the City of Sonoma has had high turnover in several senior management positions. No evidence of a policies and procedures manual exists for any of the cemeteries, nor does the City published information on cemetery fee schedules; all indicating neglect of cemetery operations.
- F7. The cemetery invoice forms do not have a line item for calculating sales tax for tangible items therefore, the accounting software program used by Sonoma does not report on their sales tax liability, resulting in failure to charge, collect, report, or pay sales tax to the CDTFA.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury recommends that:

- R1. By July 31, 2023, The City of Sonoma contacts the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration to establish procedures to collect, report, and pay sales tax on tangible items sold at the cemeteries. (F1)
- R2. By December 31, 2023, The City of Sonoma conducts a thorough analysis of the systems, processes, and procedures related to cemeteries, to include the current software program used. The Grand Jury is aware that the City of Sonoma has cited their intention, in their fiscal year (2022-2023) goals, to complete a financial analysis of the Cemetery Fund and develop a plan for resolution of the deficit in the Fund, and we encourage the City to include an operational analysis as well. (F1, F2, F3, F4, F7)
- R3. By December 31, 2023, the City of Sonoma develops a policies and procedures manual for the operations of the Cemetery Program. (F1, F2, F4, F5, F7)
- R4. By December 31, 2023, the City of Sonoma designates a manager to oversee the cemetery day-to-day operations. (F2)
- R5. By December 31, 2023, the City of Sonoma conducts a thorough review of the Cemetery Endowment Fund. The Grand Jury is aware that the City of Sonoma has cited their intention, in their fiscal year (2022-2023) goals, to complete a financial analysis of the Cemetery Fund and develop a plan for resolution of the deficit in that fund and the Grand Jury recommends that the Endowment fund is included in that analysis. (F3, F5)

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal Code §§ 933 and 933.05 the Grand Jury requires responses as follows:

- City Council of the City of Sonoma (R1 through R5)

The governing bodies indicated above should be aware that their comments and responses must be conducted subject to the notice, agenda, and open meeting requirements of the Brown Act.

INVITED RESPONSES

- City Manager of the City of Sonoma (R1 through R5)

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Regulation 1505. Funeral Directors

California Department of Tax and Fee,

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Regulation 1572. Memorial Dealers

California Department of Tax and Fee Administration,

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Regulation 1572.350.0004 Adding Second Inscription

California Department of Tax and Fee Administration,

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RJM Design Group Report, City of Sonoma Action Plan for Cemeteries, 2005

<https://www.sonomacity.org/documents/sonoma-cemeteries-action-plan-2005/>

DISCLAIMER

This report was issued by the Civil Grand Jury, with the exception of a juror who has a conflict of interest with the jurisdiction in this report. This juror was excluded from all parts of the investigation, including interviews, deliberations, and the writing and approval of the report.

Reports issued by the Civil Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code Section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Civil Grand Jury.