



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Ways and Means

Brian Worrell *Chair*

REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

April 26, 2024

Dear Councilors:

The Committee on Ways and Means was referred the following docket for consideration:

Docket #0280, Message and order for your approval an appropriation order in the amount of One Million Two Hundred and Sixty Thousand Dollars (\$1,260,000.00) for the Cemetery Division of the Parks and Recreation Department and the Trust Office of the Treasury Department to be funded from the Cemetery Trust Fund established under Chapter 13 of the Acts of 1961.

This matter was sponsored by Mayor Michelle Wu, and was referred to the Committee on February 7, 2024.

Summary

Docket #0280 is an appropriation Order in the amount of \$1,260,000 for the Cemetery Division of the Parks and Recreation Department and the Trust Office of the Treasury Department to be funded from the Cemetery Trust Fund established under Chapter 13 of the Acts of 1961. These funds are to be expended at the direction of the Commissioner of the Parks and Recreation Department, as follows:

- \$250,000 for the digitizing of cemetery records and mapping of the burials in Mt. Hope, Fairview and Evergreen Cemeteries to improve public access.
- \$75,000 for tree pruning and removal of hazardous trees in Fairview Cemetery.
- \$50,000 for tree pruning and removal of hazardous trees in Evergreen Cemetery.
- \$150,000 for tree pruning and removal of hazardous trees in Mt. Hope Cemetery.
- \$735,000 for the rehabilitation of the fence and wall on the Walk Hill Street frontage of Mt. Hope Cemetery.

Information Received at Hearing

The Committee held a public hearing on Docket #0280 on Wednesday, April 17, 2024. The Committee heard from representatives from the Administration including Thomas Sullivan, General Superintendent of Cemeteries, and Margaret Dyson, Director of Trust Division.

Superintendent Sullivan stated that the Parks and Recreation Department is requesting funding in the amount of \$1,260,000 from the Cemetery Trust fund to provide upkeep at three City-owned cemeteries including the Mt. Hope, Fairview and Evergreen Cemeteries.

He explained that \$735,000 will be spent for the rehabilitation of the fence and wall on the Walk Hill Street frontage of Mt. Hope Cemetery, \$250,000 for the digitizing of cemetery records and mapping of the burials in Mt. Hope, Fairview and Evergreen Cemeteries to improve public access, \$75,000 for

tree pruning and removal of hazardous trees in Fairview Cemetery, \$50,000 for tree pruning and removal of hazardous trees in Evergreen Cemetery, and \$150,000 for tree pruning and removal of hazardous trees in Mt. Hope Cemetery.

Superintendent Sullivan added that the Cemetery Division has a staff of 23 people and oversees 19 cemeteries in the City of Boston. Sixteen of these cemeteries are historic and three cemeteries are currently active (Mt. Hope, Fairview and Evergreen). Collectively, these cemeteries make up a total of about 270 acres of land. The three active cemeteries have about 600 to 700 burials a year.

Director Dyson stated that the Cemetery Trust is one of about 350 trusts under the City of Boston. She stated the City has invested about \$19 million into this fund, leaving the City the ability to spend about \$900,000 annually. She stated that the Cemetery Division relies heavily on these supplemental funds to conduct day-to-day operations.

Director Dyson and Superintendent Sullivan highlighted the importance of digitizing burial records for the public access, and the role cemeteries play in providing open space for the public.

Councilors and the panelists discussed various topics including the City's responsibilities for inactive cemetery upkeep, details related to veteran and indigent burials, burial costs, and potential issues for burial capacity in the future.

Committee Chair Recommended Action

As Chair of the Committee on Ways and Means, I recommend moving the listed docket from the Committee to the full Council for discussion and formal action. At that time, my recommendation to the full Council will be that this matter **OUGHT TO PASS**.

Brian Worrell

Brian Worrell, Chair
Committee on Ways and Means