

Washington Historic Cemeteries Policy Handbook

Adopted 08/12/2019

General Information

Unless otherwise noted the guidance and requirements included in this section are applicable to all cemeteries owned and maintained by the City of Washington

Ownership

The City of Washington manages the care of three cemeteries: Resthaven Cemetery, located at...City West/Tate St. Cemetery located at..., and Old School Cemetery, located at...

Administration

The cemeteries are under the general direction of the City Administrator whose office is located in City Hall. Assistance is provided by the City Clerks Office in cooperation with Public Works and Historic Properties.

Cemetery Committee is comprised of City Administrator and council with two appointees from the public at large serving...terms

Management

Records

Plots and Gravesites

Purchases

No single grave lots shall be sold. Effective June 1, 2019, the cost for a two-grave lot in any of the city cemeteries shall be \$300 for residents of the City of Washington. Funeral Homes may not purchase plots on behalf of the family.

Effective June 1, 2019, the cost for a two-grave lot in any of the city cemeteries shall be \$500 for anyone living outside the city limits of the City of Washington.

No lots shall be sold except by the city. If a deed holder has a vacant lot that is excess to the deed holders need that lot can be purchased by the city for the price originally paid

Grave opening permits

A grave opening permit shall be required for anyone opening a grave at any of the city cemeteries. The permit is to be purchased prior to the burial. The permit must contain the following information:

1. The name of the person to be buried
2. The name of the grave digger;
3. The name of the funeral home in charge
4. The date and time of the funeral
5. Cemetery section and lot number
6. The name of the person to whom the lot is deeded

7. The cost of the permit is \$25.00. The cost of an after-hours weekend and evenings permit will be \$75.00. Penalty for not obtaining a permit shall be \$200.00. Failure to comply with this section shall result in a misdemeanor offense. Repeated violation of this chapter by the funeral home can result in revocation of burial privileges.
8. Permits are to be purchased at the city business office during regular business hours: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday thru Friday. Exceptions can be made for extenuating circumstances
9. The funeral director or its agent must provide the information required on the permit. Family members may make direct payment to the city for the permit; however, the funeral director must sign an agreement that all requirements shall be met. (Sec. 20-2)

Approval of the grave opening permit

- a. Prior to issuing the permit, a representative of the funeral home, the family, and the city will meet and establish the identification of the burial plot.
- b. After an application has been properly complete, a representative of the city will verify the information to make sure the correct grave is marked for opening and then approve the permit.
- c. At this meeting a representative of the city shall inform the funeral director where any excess dirt is to be placed.
- d. Once the permit is approved, the funeral director shall be responsible for the grave until after the burial is completed.

Interments and Disinterments

Graves may be mechanically dug by an insured and bonded grave digger in all sections of all cemeteries except in Resthaven 1902 and 1923 sections. Mechanical digging in these two sections must be individually and specifically approved by the city.

Regardless of the manner of the digging, the funeral home shall be responsible for the costs of repairs to damaged cemetery grounds

Temporary markers

Funeral homes shall be responsible for installing and maintaining readable temporary markers until replaced by a permanent marker. All graves must be marked.

Visitation

The cemeteries are open from sunup to sundown. No trespassing after hours is allowed.

Maintenance by City

All lots sold shall be perpetual care lots; perpetual care includes cutting grass, removing leaves and other litter and maintaining plots in a clean and presentable condition.

Neither trees, shrubs, flagpoles, fences, nor any other object that may inhibit maintenance shall be placed on cemetery lots unless approved in writing in advance by the city. This does not prevent family or individual markers except as otherwise prohibited therein (Sec. 20-1.f)

Maintenance Guideline

Any owners' relatives or volunteers are welcome to provide additional care for the cemetery provided they abide by guidelines set forth regarding vegetation, cleaning and personal conduct.

Arrangements

Plants and flowers placed on a grave may remain until they become disarranged or cease to be of good color or condition (Sec. 20-1.g) Any arrangements that are clearly holiday themed will be removed after 30 days

All vault tops shall be buried to a minimum depth of 12 inches measured from the top of the vault to the finished grade of the closed grave.

Except as noted herein mausoleums are authorized in city cemeteries

Mausoleums are permitted following a process of design review and approval by the cemetery committee

Cleaning

Cleaning Authorization

Cleaning of cemetery structures is discouraged and limited. The intent is to preserve the cemetery as a historic asset. As with a fine antique, the value is lost through refinishing. Cleaning can also be both detrimental and corrosive, threatening the very existence of a structure. For these reasons, the pristine and coldly polished appearance of modern cemeteries is to be avoided. In instances where minimal cleaning is unavoidable, proof of family authorization shall be provided to City Hall prior to work. See appendix A for policies and procedures.

Cleaning Standards

Lichen and fungi can have a negative effect upon cemetery structures, so minimal cleaning is permissible, provided the following standards are met:

1. Cleaning of stones shall be limited to the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting, pressure washing, wire brushes and protective coatings are prohibited.
2. Cleaning of stones shall follow the approved cleaning methods
3. Use of cleaning agents is limited to the approved cleaning materials list referenced in Appendix A
4. Unauthorized cleaning and potential damage shall be reported immediately to City Hall.

Family Authorization

Cleaning by third parties, whether professional or friendly services, shall not proceed until written documentation of authorization by family heir(s) is submitted to and verified by the City Clerk and a representative of the Cemetery Committee has documented pre-cleaning conditions. See Appendix A for application and stone cleaning regulations.

Cleaning Cautions

First and foremost – do no harm

Before cleaning, check each marker for stability. DO NOT CLEAN if stability is questionable:

- Flaking face or lettering
- Significant fractures
- Grainy surface
- Any indication that the stone is delicate or brittle

Do not clean marble, sandstone, or slate stones frequently (once every 10 years is too frequent)

Clean the smallest area absolutely necessary

Approved Cleaning Methods

1. Brush off loose debris with a soft brush
2. Use a wooden tongue depressor to gently remove moss or lichen
3. Saturate stone with water (minimizes chemical absorption)
4. Mix approved cleaning materials using directions
5. Apply cleaner with a soft brush
6. IMPORTANT!! Start from the bottom up to avoid streaking. Keep stone very wet at all times. If the cleaner dries, it can stain.
7. Rinse over and over. And over. And over.

Approved Cleaning Materials

- a. Distilled water
- b. Soft-bristled brush, either natural or plastic or wood tongue depressors (no wire brushes nor metal objects of any type)
- c. Mild detergent – D/2. Any other material must be approved by the Cemetery Committee prior to use. See appendix A for comparison of different cleaning techniques.

No rubbings are allowed in the cemeteries.

Personal Conduct

No Solicitation

Alcohol and Illegal Substances

No alcoholic products nor illegal substances are permitted upon cemetery property. No intoxicated, or otherwise disorderly persons, shall be permitted.

Animals

It is unlawful for any person owning or having possession or control or care of a dog to allow the dog to stray or run at large in public places, animals are required to be on a leash and under control of a person capable of controlling the dog. All litter and feces shall be removed from any public or private property immediately, and deposited in a waste receptacle. Failure to clean up behind the animal can result in a citation for littering.

Athletics and Recreation

No use of skates, skateboards, mopeds or scooters within the cemetery is permitted. When traversing the cemetery, biking upon paved paths is allowed.

Children

No person under the age of 16 shall be permitted in the cemetery without direct supervision of a responsible adult.

Damage

No person shall sit, rest, or lean on monuments, fences or statuary. Any person who causes damage intentionally or unintentionally to public or private property in the cemetery shall be held responsible for that damage.

Intrusion and Privacy

No person who is not a member of the funeral procession or party shall intrude upon a funeral party or loiter about an open gravesite

Littering and Smoking

Littering is strictly prohibited. Cigarette butts are considered to be litter and must be removed from the cemetery by the smoker.

Noise

No audio devices are permitted within the cemetery, except personal audio devices utilizing headphones or by special permission in connection with a special activity. All persons in the immediate vicinity of a service must cease activities or operations and remain quiet during the services

Games

Treasure hunting and playing games in the cemetery is not allowed. Metal detectors are prohibited except for surveying and locating utilities. No artifacts, stonework, metalwork, or other cemetery structure or object shall be removed from the cemetery without special permission.

The speed limit in all city cemeteries is 10 miles per hour

No one shall be buried in Old School Cemetery unless the burial is to be included in a specified and marked family plot and the deceased to be buried there is a member of the identified family. No burials in Old School cemetery will be allowed without a burial permit.

Appendix A - Cleaning Authorization

Washington Georgia

Application for Gravestone Cleaning

1. Applicant Information

I, _____, certify that written family authorization that I have provided to the City of Washington is true and correct. I have read and understand the gravestone cleaning standards, cautions, methods and materials as outlined in the Washington Georgia Cemeteries Policy Handbook and hereby request a permit for gravestone cleaning.

Name

Mailing Address

Telephone/Email

2. Gravestone Information:

I have received family authorization to clean the following:

1. _____
Individual gravestone

2. _____
Individual gravestone

3. Other (please describe structure, methods, and materials):

Signature

Date

Permit for Stone Cleaning

_____ representing
_____ is hereby

authorized to clean stone and other structures as per the submitted application in accordance with the Washington Cemeteries Policy Handbook.

An application with the necessary family permission has been filed at the City of Washington. The applicant has received and reviewed a copy of the stone cleaning regulations.

Code Enforcement/Cemetery Committee

Date

Summary of Stone Cleaning Regulations:

(This summary is provided for your convenience and does not substitute for requisite review of the Policy Handbook – Cleaning pp 3-4.)

1. Gravestone cleaning is discouraged. When unavoidable, cleaning of stones is limited to the gentlest means possible – NO SANDBLASTING, PRESSURE WASHING, WIRE BRUSHES, PROTECTIVE COATINGS.
2. Before cleaning, check the marker for stability; no cleaning is permitted for gravestones that are cracked, flaking, grainy, etc.
3. Gently brush off debris and remove growth (see approved materials).
4. Using only distilled water, make sure to saturate the entire stone first
5. Start cleaning at the bottom to avoid streaking. Apply cleaner with soft brush (see approved materials). Do not press or scrub.
6. Keep stone wet at all times. Rinse, rinse, rinse, etc.
7. The City of Washington and the Cemetery Committee. Nor any owner shall be held responsible for any injuries incurred during cleaning.
8. The City of Washington and the Cemetery Committee shall not be responsible for degradation and staining caused by cleaning .
9. An application must be filed for a permit each time gravestone cleanings are intended. Violation of any of the Washington Cemetery Policy Handbook policies and procedures will void the permit and prevent acceptance of applications for further permits by that individual or group.

Table 1: Comparison of Different Cleaning Techniques

Cleaning Technique	Potential Harm to Stone	Health/Safety Issues
Sand Blasting	Erodes stone; highly abrasive; will destroy detail and lettering over time; Not advisable for use	Exposure to marble dust is a source of the fatal lung disease silicosis.
Pressure Washing	High pressure abrades stone. This can be exacerbated by inexperienced users; Not advisable for use	None, unless chemicals are added or high temperature water is used
Acid Cleaning	Creates an unnatural surface on the stone; deposits iron compounds that will stain the stone; deposits soluble salts that damage the stone; Not advisable for use	Acids are highly corrosive, requiring personal protective equipment under mandatory OSHA laws; may kill grass and surrounding vegetation
Sodium Hypochlorite & Calcium Hypochlorite (household and swimming pool bleach)	Will form soluble salts, which will reappear as whitish efflorescence; can cause yellowing; some salts are acidic, Not advisable for use	Respiratory irritant; can cause eye injury; strong oxidizer; can decompose to hazardous gasses
Hydrogen Peroxide	Often causes distinctive reddish discolorations; will etch polished marble and limestone; Not advisable for use	Severe skin and eye irritant
Ammonium Hydroxide	Repeated use may lead to discoloration through precipitation of hydroxides; Not advisable for use	Respiratory, skin and eye irritant
D/2 Architectural Antimicrobial	No known adverse effects, has been in use for nearly 15 years.	No special precautions required for use, handling or storage.

Appendix B - Cleaning Authorization

Washington Georgia

Application for Gravestone Cleaning

Family Approval for methods outside of prescribed policies

I, _____, certify that I am the owner of the property or am the living family member in charge of said property. I have read and understand the gravestone cleaning standards, cautions, methods and materials as outlined in the Washington Georgia Cemeteries Policy Handbook and hereby request a waiver of the gravestone cleaning requirements. I give permission for the methods described below to be used instead, knowing full well that these methods may cause harm to the gravestone / monument. I will not hold the City of Washington liable for any damage that happens using the methods outside of the approved methods described in the cemetery policy handbook, of which I acknowledge I have received a copy and reviewed.

Name

Mailing Address

Telephone/Email

Gravestone Information:

I have received family authorization to clean the following:

Individual gravestone

Individual gravestone

Other (please describe structure, methods, and materials):

Signature of Authorized Family Member

Date