KERN RIVER VALLEY CEMETERY DISTRICT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
MINUTES

Regular Meeting
Tuesday September 8, 2026 @ 9:00 AM
Kern River Valley Cemetery District
8441 Burlando Rd
Wofford Heights, CA 93285 County of Kern

PRESENT: Mike Ryan, Chair/President - Board of Trustees
Esteban Olivares, Treasurer
Teresa "Kat" Barnum, Secretary
Tara Overall, District Administrative Assistant
John Blythe, Interim District Consultant

ABSENT: Kathy Agapiou, 1st Vice Chair/1st Vice President
Deborah Hess, 2nd Vice Chair/2nd Vice President

A. **CALL TO ORDER – President Ryan opened the meeting at 9:00 AM.**

B. **ROLL CALL OF THE BOARD – Trustees Barnum, Olivares and Ryan present for a quorum. Trustees Agapiou and Hess were absent.**

C. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND MOMENT OF SILENCE – President Ryan gave the flag salute and moment of silence.**

D. **PUBLIC REQUESTS, COMMENTS OR PRESENTATIONS:**
Spencer Shepard, Reporter for the Kern Valley Sun, was in attendance as an observer.

E. **CONSENT AGENDA:**
1. **Regular Board Meeting Minutes – August 11, 2026**
2. **Cemetery Monthly Payment Report – August 2026**
3. **Authorize Transfer of Funds from Fund 8808 to Fund 8777 for Pre-Need Services Executed**
4. **Authorize Endowment Interest Sweep to Fund 8777**
5. **Disinterment and Release of Interest: Timmerman, Diana – Section: III-A, 64, B8**

Trustee Barnum pulled item 3 for a question, and Administrative Assistant Overall clarified that these are recouped funds when customers with pre-need contract accounts have passed away.

Action: Trustee Olivares moved to approve consent agenda; seconded by Trustee Barnum and passed with three yes votes. (Trustees Agapiou and Hess - absent).

F. FINANCIAL REPORT – August 2026
Esteban Olivares, Treasurer
Tara Overall, Administrative Assistant

District Administrative Assistant Tara Overall presented August 2026 financial report. Total income for month of August 2026 was $4,020 with total expenses at $33,898. Net loss for August was $29,878. Administrative Assistant Overall comments she will be presenting a modified budget to the board with expense reductions.

Trustee Treasurer Olivares reports that last Friday, the district had a serious bank account breach regarding a forged check through the Alta One Federal Credit Union branch in Boron, CA. Kern County Sheriff's Department has been contacted and is investigating the suspect; funds will be redeposited by Alta One.

Action: Trustee Olivares moved to approve August Financial Report; second by Trustee Barnum and passed with three yes votes. (Trustees Agapiou and Hess - absent).

G. STAFF REPORT
John Blythe, Interim District Admin. Consultant
Tara Overall, Administrative Assistant

With District Manager Sanders on leave, Administrative Assistant Overall and Interim Administrative Consultant Blythe reported on the following items:

1. **FEMA/Cal OES: Administrative Consultant Blythe reports that because he and Administrative Assistant Overall are not authorized signers or agents on the FEMA/Cal OES project account, there is a resolution submitted from Cal OES later in this morning's meeting for the board to vote on to add both of them to the account, this way outstanding items regarding the historical cemetery project can keep moving forward as there is an October deadline to close out these outstanding items from prior years. Administrative Consultant Blythe comments that Cal OES Project Manager Pam Bell from head office in Sacramento requested photos of Historical Cemetery and those were completed and submitted to Cal OES recently. Project Manager Bell is confident they can close out these outstanding items by October. Administrative Assistant Overall clarified for Trustee Barnum that these items are from prior years and WZI is waiting for these to be completed by Cal OES so they can start the next phase of the project.**

2. **Stifel Nicolaus & Co: Financial Advisor Sandra Wheeler will work on trying to set up her annual investment presentation meeting with the Board of Trustees hopefully by October. Administrative Consultant Blythe comments that effective January 1st. 2026, California Investment Laws for Local Public Agencies were revised and Financial Advisor Wheeler confirmed with him that the district's pre-need and endowment accounts are performing well and these funds were also in compliance with the new California Code revisions.**
3. **Services: Administrative Assistant Overall commented that in the last month and so far into September, the internments have been very busy, mainly with cremation interments and another disinterment. Administrative Assistant Overall reported that Groundskeeper Reno Shadden recently went to South Kern Cemetery District to learn how they perform a disinterment and the proper procedures.**
4. **CA Association of Public Cemeteries Annual Fall Education Summit: Will be held October 9th-10th in San Francisco. Trustee Barnum expresses an interest in attending.**
5. **Goals and Objectives: Administrative Consultant Blythe strongly recommends to the Board of Trustees that they need to start serious discussions of immediate short term and long-term goals for the district and comments that when he was on the board, these were always discussion items. Most pressing issue is to address the district's serious financial situation and to start making decisions about what to do. Administrative Consultant Blythe comments that at last board meeting, Auditor Brejnak's report to the board had recommendations to immediately begin restoring operating reserves, cut expenses through budget paring and improving financial projections. Administrative Assistant Overall will be presenting financial plan with modified budget and cuts and will present this to the board. Administrative Consultant Blythe recommends one goal, for example, should be that the district work to restore its general fund with the county by at least $100,000 or more by fiscal year end June 30th, 2027, and measure it based on controlling expenses, property tax revenue allocations and at-need services. Other goals the district needs to have discussion items on are regarding the continued maintenance of the district's grounds, the new water well system, and the eventual long-term goals about what do with the cemetery grounds such as for example, potential grants for possibly a future amphitheater, veterans park, etc.**
6. **CalPERS Liabilities: CalPERS unfunded liabilities have always been an on-going concern. District has been with CalPERS since 2004. While Auditor Kevin Brejnak has reported that the district is currently solvent, the CalPERS accrued liabilities continue to make the future of the district financially concerning. Administrative Consultant Blythe mentions when he was on the Board of Trustees that CalPERS was discussed frequently and was always an area of concern by both management and the board. CalPERS has been in the news again regarding severe funding shortfalls, underperformance of investment funds and lack of transparency. The current total unfunded state-wide pension liabilities are between $165 billion and $179 billion making it the largest unfunded public state pension fund in the entire United States. President Ryan comments that CalPERS' unfunded liabilities could**

potentially break the state budget because it has ballooned over the years. President Ryan states that he has shared concerns about CalPERS at previous board meetings but felt his concerns were not taken seriously. There has recently been a push by public employee unions, financial advocates and some state legislative support to have more oversight into CalPERS and have its funds investigated by an independent Inspector General. Administrative Consultant Blythe recommends that with some of the new developments into CalPERS it may be advantageous for the Board of Trustees to write letters to the district's State Assemblyperson and Senator and to potentially encourage other districts with CalPERS liabilities to do the same.

7. **Grounds: Groundskeeper Reno Shadden is continuing to monitor and control irrigation. Groundskeeper Shadden is also due for a performance evaluation. Administrative Assistant Overall will work on this and have at least one board trustee to fill out his evaluation.**
8. **Trustee Resignation: Trustee Agapiou reported via a phone call to staff last Friday with her intention of resigning from the Board of Trustees and will be submitting a formal letter to President Ryan and to the district office which will be forwarded to the Clerk of the County Board of Supervisors regarding the vacancy.**

H. OLD BUSINESS:

1. **Consider Modifying Prices for Burials: President Ryan requests Administrative Assistant Overall to continue gathering additional prices settings for opening/closing, weekends, holidays, etc. with districts comparable to this district. This item was tabled.**

I. NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Adopt New Cal OES Resolution 130 to Add District Employees: Cal OES forwarded a new resolution to add Administrative Assistant Overall and Administrative Consultant Blythe to Cal OES projects to assist in finalizing outstanding items for October deadline. Board of Trustees needs to approve resolution and be signed by Chairperson Ryan reflecting new additions as authorized agents on project accounts.**

   Action: Trustee Barnum moved to adopt and approve New Cal OES Resolution 130; second by Trustee Olivares and passed with three yes votes. (Trustees Agapiou and Hess - absent).

J. DIRECTORS COMMENTS OR REPORTS NOT APPEARING ON THE AGENDA:

Trustee Barnum: Questioned President Ryan about Trustees asking questions of staff and felt he was being dismissive. Is very concerned about the forged check incident that happened last Friday. She would like the person to be prosecuted and to bring awareness to the community that fraud and forged signatures and bank accounts getting hacked have been a serious concern.

Trustee Olivares: Shares the same sentiments with Trustee Barnum regarding the forged check. He is going to be taking a new class dealing with PTSD which will require him to be in Portland Oregon part of the time. As such, he is announcing that he will be resigning as a member of the Board of Trustees. He thanked the fellow board members and staff for everything they do for the district and has enjoyed his time of public service on the board since he was first appointed to this office seat in 2020.

Trustee President Ryan: Responded to Trustee Barnum's question that he does not mind Trustees asking questions but told Trustee Barnum that he was interrupted by her twice when he had the floor regarding discussion about FEMA and CalPERS. Reiterates his comments from last month's meeting that having driven into the district campus through the upper section and commented that the district grounds and grass is looking much better. He also reports that he is happy the office is being maintained properly and professionally. He would like to see the district begin utilizing the public works and community service workers because that is free labor to the district and assisting Groundskeeper Shadden on the grounds. He wishes Trustee Agapiou well in her health recovery and thanked her for her service and also wished Trustee Olivares well in his future endeavors and thanked him for his service on the board of trustees.

K. ADJOURNMENT: President Ryan adjourned the meeting at 10:05 AM.

Attest:
Teresa "Kat" Barnum
Secretary, Board of Trustees

Next Regular Board of Trustees Meeting on Tuesday October 13th, 2026 @ 9:00 AM