

Safety cited for Oak Hill changes

(KAIR)--Changes are approved for Atchison's Oak Hill Cemetery. "I'd entertain a motion to adopt ordinance 6625 establishing a method to mitigate hazardous and/or toppled cemetery monuments, in addition to clarifying the regulations of decorating graves at Oak Hill Cemetery," Mayor Shawn Rizza said, as he called the vote for the change Tuesday.

The vote followed a presentation from Director of Public Works Clinton McNemee, who explained aging gravestones need to be removed as a matter of public safety. "The proposed plan was to come up with an ordinance that would allow us to remove the offending monuments, set them aside for a period of three years, is what this ordinance is proposing. If after three years, no one claims, or resets the monuments on their own, we would be authorized then to dispose of the monuments permanently."

McNemee explained the monuments would be replaced with metal plaques. "We're going to put in place small, flush mounted markers...that show the legal descriptions. They won't have names, or any of those things on there"

Assistant Atchison City Manager Justin Pregont spoke during discussion on the change, saying accidents involving loose headstones can be serious. "For anybody who thinks that these proposed policies are heavy handed, just do some Googling for cemetery accident and I think you're quickly change your mind that this is the right way to."

Residents, including Rita Hartman and Joyce Allen, addressed the Commission about the change, with both saying relatives connected to the removed monuments should be contacted by the City.

Pregont said every effort will be made to contact affected relatives. "We'll do every communication tool at our disposal, we'll use to try and let folks know."

The City will also explore how much information can be placed on the plaques that will replace the headstones.

The change was approved unanimously by a vote of the Commission.

Many Signals Communications