

Cemetery Committee Annual Report

July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023

"To every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die . . ."
Ecclesiastes 3:1-2

Services Provided

When a death occurred or was imminent, Temple Beth Shalom, through Rabbis Freedman and Steinman, the Cemetery Committee, and the Chevra K'vod Hamet, responded to our members and the Jewish community with caring, compassion, and competence.

- Arrangements and Counseling – Since July 1st, 2022 (this fiscal year), we managed the logistics and oversaw 10 interments and several unveilings at our cemetery, and supported the loved ones of the now deceased. In addition, guidance and support were provided to many of the families and surviving spouses regarding headstones, unveilings, the purchase of gravesites, and other personal matters.
- High Holy Days – As in past years, we participated in the development of the Temple Beth Shalom Cemetery page of the Book of Remembrance (now being done electronically). With the easing of COVID restrictions, we resumed our Remembering Our Loved Ones memorial service at the Beth Shalom cemetery and thus our management and coordination of the logistics for that most cherished event. This year's Remembering Our Loved Ones service is scheduled to be held at our cemetery on Sunday, September 17, 2023.
- Unveiling Planning – We contacted (or attempted to contact) families of recently buried loved ones in our cemetery to remind them of the Jewish practice of placing a memorial marker at the grave within 12 months of interment. In nearly every case, one of the Cemetery Co-Chairs joined them with the memorial provider of their choice, either in person or telephonically, to assist in developing the memorial. Two more unveilings are planned in the next 4 months. You should also know that the length of the supply chain for certain headstone configurations, is now nearly a year long.

Cemetery Improvements

Landscaping – Following receipt of the required permits from the City's arborist and the Parks & Recreation Department (PARD), a deep root feeding of the Live Oak trees was performed by the Davey Tree Company. Another deep root feeding is planned to be completed this Summer.

We continued our struggle to maintain and cultivate the existing dwarf yaupon holly bushes and Live Oak trees, most of which were planted 14 years ago along the east boundary of our cemetery. Soil analyses conducted by two independent laboratories have yielded no helpful clues, and we are reluctant to replace the now absent landscaping until we can confirm the cause of their demise. The yaupons were initially selected, in part, because of their reputation for drought and disease tolerance. PARD management has been less than helpful.

Administration and Financial Management

- Gravesite Cost – Almost every year, typically on October 1, the City has raised its prices on gravesites as well as on administrative fees and other services. Despite those unavoidable actions, the temple decided to absorb those increases, maintaining the same price it has been charging congregants since October 1, 2017. For those who are unaware, our cemetery-related activities and expenses receive no funding from Temple Beth Shalom. Cemetery related projects such as the original irrigation design, engineering, and installation, land surveys, filing fees, and periodic landscaping improvements (see above paragraph), are funded solely through the sale of gravesites.
- Gravesite Purchases – We again experienced above average sales of gravesites with 17 plots purchased by 9 families or individuals. To keep a reasonable selection of gravesites available in inventory at the lowest possible price, 54 additional spaces were acquired from the City. We will likely purchase additional gravesites from the City before they raise their sales prices on October 1. Cumulatively, we have purchased 382 gravesites. Ninety-six loved ones are now buried in our cemetery.
- Texas Jewish Historical Society – We continued our relationship with the local chapter of the Jewish War Veterans (JWV), and through them with the Texas Jewish Historical Society (TJHS). It is the objective of the TJHS to document every Jewish person buried in the State of Texas, often including a photograph of the deceased headstone. The Jewish War Veterans organizations also place a small US flag at the headstone marker of every Jewish veteran on Memorial Day.

Yahrzeit Memorial Wall

Memorial Wall Expansion - With our Yahrzeit Memorial Wall rapidly filling up with personalized plaques memorializing our loved ones, Sam Scheer and Nancy Mayers led the actions to add four more columns that added space for 80 additional plaques. With the construction skill and energies of congregant Dennis Gross, our expanded Memorial Wall was completed.

In Case You Haven't Heard

You are invited to read the following supplemental pages.

Your questions, comments, and suggestions on any aspect of our cemetery are always welcomed and appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,

Sam Scheer Larry Cohen

Cemetery Co-Chairs

In Case You Haven't Heard

Not too long ago during an unusually rainy, windy, and stormy night, a man (who shall remain nameless) was walking home alone, down a dark, deserted street that ran by the cemetery. As he passed the gates, he heard a bump in the darkness behind him. Not daring to look back, he quickened his pace. But the bumping noise continued behind him. He finally stopped and turned to see what it was. Coming down the road behind him was a coffin, standing on end, bumping from side to side.

BUMP,

BUMP,

BUMP.

The man, terrified for his life, turned and started running. Behind him, the coffin came faster.

BUMP.

BUMP,

BUMP!

Ahead of him, there was a branch that had fallen from a tree. He reached down and grabbed it as he ran by. Still running, he turned and threw it over his shoulder at the coffin -- but it just splintered when it hit the coffin and the coffin continued coming even faster.

BUMPITY BUMP,

BUMPITY BUMP,

BUMPITY BUMP!

Our hero turned the corner onto his street and ran through his front yard, the coffin right behind him. His splitting axe was resting against his woodpile so he snagged it, turned, and gave it a mighty two-handed throw - sending it end over end right at the coffin.

SMASH!

The axe shattered on the unnaturally strong wood of the coffin, as it continued after him. The man dashed into his house, but the coffin crashed through the front door. The man ran upstairs and grabbed his shotgun off the wall.

He blasted the coffin with both barrels, but the shots bounced harmlessly off the coffin as it continued up the stairs.

BUMP,

CLOP,

BUMP,

CLOP!

The man, desperate and scared to death at this point, jumped into his bathroom and locked the door – knowing that it would do no good. The coffin banged against the door ... once ... twice ... and on the third attempt, the door exploded, and the coffin lunged forward.

In desperation, the man reached out his hand and grabbed whatever he could. All that was there was a bottle of cough syrup; so, he threw it at the coffin.

The bottle shattered; cough syrup covered the entire coffin from top to bottom.

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And the coffin stopped.