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EU Cemetery's license expired 20 months ago

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City Editor

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There are still a lot of unanswered questions about the nonprofit association that has been running the pioneer East Union Cemetery.

A staff member at the Cemetery and Funeral Bureau of the Department of Consumer Affairs in Sacramento told the Manteca Bulletin Tuesday that according to state records, the cemetery's license expired on Jan. 1, 2006.

Asked about the reason why the license expired, the staff said, "I couldn't tell you. But we're currently pursuing disciplinary action against the cemetery."

Russ Heimerich, the official spokesman for the Department of Consumer Affairs which oversees cemeteries and funerals in California, said the license expired because it was delinquent and the cemetery association had not renewed it.

That the cemetery continued to hold funerals even though its license was delinquent "is not always uncommon," and that funerals can still be held "under certain circumstances," he explained.

However, as to the specifics of the delinquency, Heimerich said he was not sure and that he was going to find that out today.

But, he said, "I know that their license is delinquent."

He also pointed out that the state's "case investigation" about the cemetery is still ongoing.

In fact, a year after the cemetery's license expired, the state filed a complaint against the cemetery followed by an investigation which culminated in the recommendation by an administrative law judge that the license be revoked because the cemetery lacks a licensed cemetery manager which is required by law. That official recommendation was going to take place last week, but a last-minute intervention by a group of concerned citizens, intent on rescuing the historic burial ground, started the ball rolling to stall that final action by the Department of Consumer Affairs while they try to iron out the problems of the association which led to the current mess in the first place.

Among the first actions of the group was to form a new and expanded association board. The new cemetery officials elected Carlon Perry as president.

However, the Bulletin has learned that there are still more questions than answers facing the new board. Among them:

- What happened to the reported \$800,000 endowment fund that the association had in the bank 10 years ago? Joanne Foster, one of the five original members of the old board, brought that up during the second emergency meeting held last week at the Manteca Historical Museum.
- What happened to the stocks that reportedly included PG&E stocks that the association bought in the 1920s and which reportedly disappeared 10 years ago? Association records indicate that such stocks were bought by the association, the Bulletin has learned.
- The Bulletin also learned that a former member of the board ran off with \$75,000 of the association's money but that the individual was never prosecuted because "they couldn't prove it."

- The association was reportedly solvent up to the 1970s, but what happened after that is not clear. It's also not known if the cemetery has any insurance.

The new board, which now consists of the original five plus nine who were officially accepted at the Friday meeting last week, hopes to get the answers to these and other questions today when they meet at the museum. The meeting will begin at 4 p.m. The museum is located on the southwest corner of West Yosemite Avenue and Locust Street.

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