

ALTA CEMETERY DISTRICT

Office of

SMITH MOUNTAIN CEMETERY

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PUBLIC STATEMENT REGARDING WATER

As many people are aware, the appearance of Smith Mountain Cemetery is not what the community is accustomed to seeing. Due to the drought in the State of California, combined with the geography of the land surrounding the cemetery and other factors, we are no longer able to obtain sufficient water pressure to maintain the cemetery grounds as they used to be. We currently have one working well. The other two wells are dry because of their shallow depth.

Smith Mountain Cemetery is located at the base of a mountain, which is formed of rock. There are neighboring wells that have been drilled to a depth of one thousand feet pumping hundreds of gallons of water per minute to agricultural land. The drought, combined with these factors, have had a severe impact on cemetery water pressure and available water.

The District has contacted several Well Drillers for advice and for quotes for drilling a new well. We have been advised that drilling anything less than a one thousand foot well may only be a temporary fix due to the depth of neighboring wells. Additionally, not all well drillers have the equipment to be able to drill through the granite at a depth the cemetery may require. The cost of a well drilled to one thousand feet is estimated to be more than half a million dollars. The District does not have the financial reserves for such an estimate.

When selecting a site for placement of a well, there are Health Department requirements that must be followed. A well must not be placed within one hundred feet from interments, twenty-five feet from the front boundary and five feet from all other boundaries of the property. We must also consider future development of the cemetery so that we stay in compliance of the requirements well into the future. These restrictions severely limit our ability to locate a new well.

State regulations also continue to restrict the use of water. On May 24, 2022, the State Water Resources Control Board adopted emergency water conservation regulations in response to the Governor's March Executive Order and voted unanimously to implement a statewide ban on watering of non-functional grass in the commercial, industrial, and institutional sectors, as well as regulations requiring local agencies to implement water use restrictions. The new restriction banning the watering of non-functional grass is proposed to take effect June 10, 2022. The regulations are a work in progress and not clearly defined at this time. However, what is known is that the State will continue to impose restrictions as the water crisis continues.

Considering State regulations, the cost of a new well, and the ongoing drought, the District will be looking into alternative landscape designs that do not include grass. Before any new landscape design is implemented, the District will present the designs to the public for input at its regular meetings. Please keep an eye on our agendas for discussions on alternative landscaping.

Thank you for your patience and understanding.

The Board of Directors of
Alta Cemetery District

6/10/2022