



Monterey County

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Board Report

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- a. Receive a report on options for supporting Phase II in the development of Central Coast Veterans Cemetery, which would allow for in-ground burials; and,
- b. Direct staff to report back to the Board of Supervisors by September 12, 2017.

RECOMMENDATION:

- a. Receive a report on options for supporting Phase II in the development of Central Coast Veterans Cemetery, which would allow for in-ground burials; and,
- b. Direct staff to report back to the Board of Supervisors by September 12, 2017.

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

The Central Coast Veterans Cemetery is owned and managed by the State of California as one of three California State Veterans Cemeteries. Currently, only Phase I of development is complete and only accommodates cremated remains. Phase II would allow for in-ground burials, an important religious consideration.

During Budget Hearings, the Department of Social Services was asked to report back on options for supporting Phase II. It is estimated that total Phase II project costs would be \$9.2 million with \$6.2 million being funded through US Department of Veterans Affairs' National Cemetery administration (NCA), and a local share requirement estimated to be \$3.0 million. This includes a contingency based on the experience in developing Phase I where the NCA reduced the federal share from their first estimate. It's anticipated the \$6.2 million could be reduced by from 10% to 15% in the NCA's final commitment to this Phase.

Currently, the Central Coast Veterans Cemetery Foundation has raised \$1.6 million, leaving a local funding need of approximately \$1.4 million.

There is a level of urgency towards pursuing a Federal Fiscal Year 2017 Federal Veterans Cemetery Grant, since the Phase II expansion of the Central Coast Veterans Cemetery has a high ranking given the cemetery is already established, has solid local backing, and Federal appropriations are available this Fiscal Year. Additionally, there is concern that only providing for the interment of cremated remains does not offer access to individuals and loved ones whose faith requires in-ground burial. The timeframe for a Federal Fiscal Year 2017 grant is to identify all non-Federal funding sources by the end of August so that the California Department of Finance can certify that the non-Federal funds are available prior to finalization of the application before the end of October, when the Federal Fiscal Year ends. If the Veterans Cemetery Grant is not submitted during Federal Fiscal Year 2017, then future year funding opportunities would need to be pursued.

While there is no indication that future Federal funds will not be available, there are two challenges with delaying pursuit of Federal funds in the current Federal Fiscal Year. 1) Given difficult budget discussions, it is unclear the level of Federal appropriation that will be available; and, 2) Given the competitive nature of the funding it is unclear whether the priority ranking for the Central Coast Veterans Cemetery level will be sustained.

Preliminary Assessment of Options

The County has allocated approximately 3 acres of the former Fort Ord property under its domain as an Endowment Parcel, along with 27 acres within the City of Seaside domain. Currently, the MOU defining use of the Endowment Parcel is in the process of being renegotiated between the Fort Ord Reuse Authority, the County of Monterey and the City of Seaside. It is not anticipated that this MOU will be completed before the end of October. Proceeds from the sale of the Endowment Parcel are intended to support the expansion and operation of the Central Coast Veterans Cemetery. Prior to finalization of the MOU and sale of the parcel, the property is not a liquid asset available to meet the Federal grant requirements.

Potential options include:

Planning for resolution of the MOU and sale of the Endowment Parcel to support expansion of the Central Coast Veterans Cemetery in a future year Federal appropriation for the Veterans Cemetery Grants Program; and

Allocating discretionary County General Fund Contributions to meet Federal grant requirements.

It is recommended that staff from the Military and Veterans Affairs Office and the Department of Social Services, in consultation with the County Administrative Office report back to your Board by September 12, 2017 with an assessment of the viability of these options. This is prior to the final October 31, 2017 deadline for finalization of the Federal Fiscal Year 2017 Veterans Cemetery Grant.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The Fort Ord Reuse Authority has been renegotiating the MOU defining the Endowment Parcel with City of Seaside and County of Monterey.

FINANCING:

The receipt of this report has no impact to the County General Fund Contributions.

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