

ORANGE COUNTY CEMETERY DISTRICT
Board of Trustees
February 3, 2026

MINUTES

The monthly meeting of the Orange County Cemetery District Board of Trustees was called to order by Chair Noel Hatch at 10:04 a.m., in the Board Room of the Orange County Cemetery District, 25751 Trabuco Rd., Lake Forest, CA 92630.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chair Hatch.
Roll Call by Board Secretary, Mary Funk.

PRESENT:	Noel Hatch, Chair	Fifth District
	Raymond Schnell, Vice Chair	Third District
	Maribel Marroquin-Waldram	First District
	Kelly Rivers	Second District

STAFF: Tim Deutsch, General Manager
Brenda Manriquez, Finance and Accounting Manager
Mary Funk, Board Secretary
Julio Amarillas, Cemetery Manager (Attended Remotely)

PUBLIC COMMENTS - None

CONSENT CALENDAR

- A. Approval of Minutes – Regular Board Meeting, January 6, 2026
- B. Approval of the January 2026 Check Register (Claims) Nos. 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118 and 119.
- C. Authorization of the March 2026 Check Register (Claims) Nos. 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152 and 153.
- D. Acceptance of the Quarterly Investment Report for period ending December 31, 2025

MOTION: of Trustee Rivers, seconded by Trustee Marroquin-Waldram and carried by a vote of 4-0, approved the Consent Calendar.

MANAGER REPORTS

A. Interments and Interment Space Sales Reports – December 2025

The following interment and interment space sales for December 2025 were reviewed.

Chair

Secretary

			<u>2025-2026</u>	<u>2024-2025</u>
ANAHEIM	Interments	7 (4 Urn)	34 (22 Urn)	32 (20 Urn)
	Lot Sales	4	16	16
EL TORO	Interments	64 (20 Urn)	403 (171 Urn)	452 (163 Urn)
	Lot Sales	53	261	281
SANTA ANA	Interments	28 (9 Urn)	158 (44 Urn)	107 (62 Urn)
	Lot Sales	13	110	43
TOTAL	Interments	99 (33 Urn)	595 (237 Urn)	591 (245 Urn)
	Lot Sales	70	387	340

GM Deutsch was happy to report that this meeting marks his 240th Board meeting and today is actually his 20-year anniversary with the District.

For the Monthly Activity Report, GM Deutsch stated that Anaheim Cemetery sold 4 niche interment spaces in December and staff conducted 7 interment services which included three casket burials, 3 niche inurnments and one Rose Garden placement. Sales for Anaheim Cemetery are even with last year with 16 sales so far. Staff conducted 34 interment services this year compared to 32 in the previous year.

El Toro Memorial Park sold 53 interment spaces in December including 32 casket spaces, 1 infant space, 16 niches, and 4 in-ground cremation spaces. Staff conducted 64 interment services including 44 full casket burials, 6 niche inurnments, 1 Rose Garden Placement, and 13 in-ground cremation burials. El Toro Memorial Park has approximately 329 full casket spaces remaining. That number continues to fluctuate as GM Deutsch and Cemetery Manager Bud Bales find additional spaces through on site lot reviews and as families sell or exchange spaces. GM Deutsch predicts that at the current rate of sale, El Toro should be able to continue selling through August 2027 before El Toro is sold out. Year-to-date, as expected El Toro is down on sales with 261 sales this year compared to 281 in the previous year. Interment services are also down with 403 interments completed this fiscal year, compared to 452 in the previous year.

Santa Ana sold 13 interment spaces which include 11 full casket spaces, 1 niche and 1 in-ground cremation space. Staff conducted 28 interment services which included 19 full casket burials, 2 niche inurnments, 1 Rose Garden Placement and 6 in-ground cremation burials. As of yet, there have been no sales in the new RM Section. At the current rate of sale, GM Deutsch estimates that Santa Ana Cemetery will have available inventory through October 2028 before they are sold out.

Overall, the District is up year-to-date on interment space sales with 387 sales completed this year, compared to 340 in the previous year. The District is also just slightly ahead on interment services with 595 interment services completed this fiscal year, compared to 591 in the previous year. GM Deutsch also noted that as full casket space dwindles, the cremation rate will continue to climb. Currently the District's overall cremation rate is just about 40%. The Income Statement is a good reference to see where revenue is being generated.

B. Financial Reports – December 2025

Brenda Manriquez stated that the District is well over what was anticipated for property tax revenue. In December, we got about \$1.1 million in property tax revenue. The District is also ahead on Redevelopment Tax revenue. Trustee Schnell asked why property taxes would have these variations. Brenda Manriquez explained that with properties being sold, new tax assessments are created and it also could be that more people are paying their property taxes in a timely fashion, whereas last year they may have been more slow to pay. Interest rates are coming down, but we are still well over budget expectations.

For expenses, Salaries & Benefits are slightly higher than budgeted. Some of that is the new MOU and overtime, but some of it is also just timing and month end accruals. The 1910 Account for Professional Legal Services is now caught up through January. We had been waiting for Quintanilla and Associates to send us their invoices for the last few months. Utilities are well under budget which is mostly credited to the all the rain we had in November and December which brought our water bills down substantially.

Vice Chair Schnell asked if the new salaries approved in the MOU were included in the budget. Brenda Manriquez said that they were not. We will have to do a budget adjustment to account for the salary changes approved in the new MOU. GM Deutsch also noted that the Economic Uncertainty Fund can be used to offset the overages from Salaries & Benefits.

For equipment, Brenda Manriquez stated that the new cameras for security are enough to capitalize it all together.

For the 4200 Building and Improvement Account expenses were mostly for the new property with invoices from the various design team members. Chair Hatch asked if new equipment is off the shelf. GM Deutsch stated that it likely will be. The topography of the new cemetery will be relatively flat, so at this time, he is not anticipating a need for four-wheel drive mowers or backhoes, like we need at El Toro Memorial Park. We will be gathering our thoughts on equipment needs next year and start getting quotes.

Brenda Manriquez reported that the Balance Sheet looks good. The District has just over \$6 million in Pre-need deposits that we can borrow against for the project. She also pointed out the Assigned – Land Development has over \$3 million now and she is recommending committing some of those funds toward the end of this fiscal year.

C. Finance & Investment Committee Meeting Scheduling

GM Deutsch explained that originally the Finance & Investment Committee only had two members, but when Trustee Nelson passed away, it became a Committee of the Whole. When it was only a 2-person Committee, they would review matters and then present their thoughts to the full Board at the next meeting. However, now that it is a Committee of the whole, it doesn't make sense to hold an entirely separate Committee Meeting, if the subject matter can be readily incorporated into a Regular Board Meeting. GM Deutsch explained the various matters that are typically included in the February Finance and Investment Committee Meeting. Vice Chair Schnell thought that these matters could be easily included in the March Board Meeting. The rest of the Board agreed with this, so there will be no Finance and Investment Committee

Meeting in February. Brenda Manriquez recommended holding a Committee Meeting as staff gets closer to formulating the new budget.

D. Interest Rates – December 2025

GM Deutsch stated that interest rates at the end of 2025 were relatively flat with only minor decreases.

E. Investment Portfolio Changes - December 2025

GM Deutsch reported that the District redeemed a few investments in December. Some of the new investments that were purchased had lower yields than the ones redeemed. Vice Chair Schnell commented that he would not be surprised to see a 100 basis point cut in the last half of the year.

F. Capital Projects Update

GM Deutsch said that he is participating in Gypsum Canyon update meetings every Thursday that include the development team, County Staff, Calvet, and the Department of General Services. He met with Mat Miller and James Campbell on January 12th and got a commitment for draft documentation on the use of County funds for the cemetery development.

On January 28th, GM Deutsch met with Supervisor Nguyen's Chief of Staff and other staff members to provide an update on the project and the need to develop community contacts pertaining to the development of the Allied Veterans Section. GM Deutsch explained that both the First Responders Section and the Allied Veterans Section will operate on an At-Need only basis similar to the State and Federal Veterans Cemeteries. This will also help to keep our maintenance footprint smaller. GM Deutsch said he would be meeting with the First Responders in the next couple of weeks. Trustee Marroquin-Waldram stated that she was aware of a potential grant opportunity and would forward that information to GM Deutsch. GM Deutsch also stated he asked that Supervisor Nguyen reappoint Trustee Rivers. He is also working with Supervisor Sarmiento's office with the goal of getting Trustee Marroquin-Waldram reappointed, stressing to both Supervisors that maintaining a cohesive Board is critical at this time.

GM Deutsch said that he has not heard anything from Supervisor Chaffee's office about an appointment to replace Trustee Cynthia Ward.

G. Eagle Scout Project – Gypsum Canyon

GM Deutsch updated the Board on the Eagle Scout Project that is taking place at Gypsum Canyon. Boy Scout Reed Stoneburner is installing fencing to protect the Oak trees located in the entry parking lot. This will prevent agencies from parking heavy equipment on the root system which is harmful to the trees. The project also includes the installation of two benches and the placement of fresh mulch from OC Waste and Recycling around the base of the trees. This will create a pleasing area where site tours can begin and will be a permanent feature for the new cemetery as well as for OC Parks. GM Deutsch said at some point we will do a ceremony at the site recognizing Reed for all his hard work.

H. Staff Appreciation Awards Luncheon

GM Deutsch informed the Board that the District will be hosting a Staff Appreciation Awards Luncheon on February 24, 2026 at 12:00 p.m. The event will be held at El Toro Memorial Park in the Maureen Rivers Memorial Niche Garden. The event will be catered by TK Burgers. We are expecting about 40 people including several retirees. Four employees will be honored who are reaching milestones in years of service. All of the Trustees are encouraged to attend.

NEW BUSINESS**A. Proposed Amendments to ISDOC Bylaws**

GM Deutsch informed the Board that the Independent Special Districts of Orange County are making some minor changes to the organization's bylaws.

MOTION: of Trustee Rivers, seconded by Trustee Marroquin-Waldram and carried by a vote of 4-0, approved the ISDOC Bylaw amendments and authorized the General Manager to submit the executed ballot to ISDOC before the February 27, 2026 deadline at 5:00 p.m.

B. Legal Counsel Agreement Proposal Review

GM Deutsch reminded the Board that at the last meeting he was directed to send out Request for Proposals to the two firms the Board felt could best meet the District's needs. Those firms were Buchalter Law firm in Irvine and Woodruff & Smart in Costa Mesa. The proposals they submitted were attached in the agenda packet.

Chair Hatch asked each Trustee if they had any opinions on which firm would be the best fit for the District

Vice Chair Schnell stated that he felt Woodruff & Smart would be the best choice. Trustee Marroquin-Waldram preferred Buchalter Law Firm. Trustee Rivers stated that she was undecided.

Vice Chair Schnell pointed out that Buchalter's attorney, Philip Schroeder's discounted rate was \$570 an hour, while David Kendig's rate at Woodruff and Smart was \$375 an hour. Vice Chair Schnell asked what we were paying for Counsel Quintanilla. GM Deutsch answered that we were getting an extremely good rate with Counsel Quintanilla at \$150 an hour and that these firms would obviously be higher. On a monthly basis we were using about 20 hours a month at a monthly cost of about \$3,000. He also stated that we will certainly be ramping up our legal needs in order to move further with the Gypsum Canyon development. Vice Chair Schnell stated that he knows Woodruff and Smart to be an exceptional firm that understands the complexities of real estate law. They have represented the City of Tustin for 10 to 12 years.

Trustee Marroquin-Waldram asked Chair Hatch for his opinion since he is an attorney himself. Chair Hatch stated that his concern with Buchalter is that the District could be a tiny cog compared to other clients, and their rate is considerably higher. Trustee Hatch stated that he does not believe the District would get better representation by paying more, adding that he feels we would get more personal representation with Woodruff and Smart.

Trustee Marroquin-Waldram agreed that there is obviously a difference in price, and Buchalter may be a huge firm, but that also means they have enormous resources at their disposal. Buchalter represents the Orange County Sheriff's Advisory Council, which is a small non-profit, but the treatment the Council receives from Buchalter has always been exceptional. Trustee Marroquin-Waldram stated that she has worked with five different attorneys from that firm and they are very impressive and responsive.

Trustee Rivers said that we do have to consider costs. GM Deutsch said that they are proposing a three-year contract to get the District through the opening on the new cemetery. He agreed that we have to be very mindful of costs adding that the District will need to be as frugal as possible until the new cemetery is up and running.

Finance and Accounting Manager, Brenda Manriquez asked if there was anything from our previous relationship with Woodruff that should be considered. GM Deutsch said that there was a conflict with one of our previous Trustees, but it had nothing to do with the performance of Woodruff and Smart.

Chair Hatch stated that for the next two years it will be important to have legal representation by a firm who has strong land development experience, has a good understanding of the Orange County political environment, and a knowledge of the County of Orange and how it functions. Prior to this development the District's most serious legal needs were more for labor negotiations. GM Deutsch stated that Woodruff and Smart Attorney, Barbara Raileanu would be quite capable of handling the District's labor and employment needs. GM Deutsch also added that Woodruff and Smart also knows cemetery law.

The Board asked GM Deutsch which firm he would prefer. GM Deutsch stated that he knows both David and Phil personally and each firm would give the District excellent representation. But money is an issue. GM Deutsch stated that he would select Woodruff and Smart. GM Deutsch stated that with either firm, we would have to have a contract for at least two years, but perhaps we could amend the contract to so that it would be for two years or until Gypsum Canyon is up and running. Vice Chair Schnell stated that we could amend the contract to add, "The Client may discharge Attorney with thirty (30) days' notice with or without cause."

Trustee Marroquin-Waldram stated that she would not be opposed to selecting Woodruff and Smart, but agrees with Vice Chair Schnell that this clause should be added to the contract.

MOTION: of Trustee Marroquin-Waldram, seconded by Vice Chair Schnell and carried by a vote of 4-0, directed the General Manager to proceed with executing the proposal from Woodruff and Smart, APC, with the addition of the clause to the agreement stating, "The Client may discharge Attorney with thirty (30) days' notice with or without cause."

Since Jasmid Enciso with Rojas Public Affairs had joined the meeting remotely, GM Deutsch asked if the Board could move to New Business, Item D. State Advocacy Services for Gypsum Canyon Development.

D. State Advocacy Services for Gypsum Canyon Development

GM Deutsch explained that a few years ago he had met Jaime Rojas, President of Rojas Public Affairs and had discussed the possibility of working together to explore opportunities for State and Federal funding for various aspects of the Gypsum Canyon development. All of the State and Federal Funding obtained so far will only benefit the Veterans portion of the development. There may be State funding available that could be obtained for utilities or fire protection, specifically the heli-hydrant. At the time GM Deutsch originally spoke with Mr. Rojas, the timing for the project was just not right. But now may be the ideal time to explore such opportunities and a firm like Rojas Public Affairs may be able to assist.

GM Deutsch, explained that Mr. Rojas was not available for today's meeting and asked Ms. Enciso to introduce herself. Ms. Enciso explained to the Board that Proposition 4 is a \$10 billion climate bond that is supposed to authorize funds to communities for wildfire resilience, safe drinking water, drought response, parks, and climate adaptation. But administrative delays have made it very difficult for anyone to actually access that money.

Assemblymember Alvarez has put forth AB 35 that exempts Proposition 4 guidelines from the Administrative Procedures Act, allowing state agencies to actually receive those funds quicker. Ms. Enciso explained that when AB 35 passes, there will be a lot of competition for those funds. Rojas Public Affairs can work with staff to identify needs that may fit under Prop 4 such as the heli-hydrant, storm water management, flood mitigation, water capture and storage.

Rojas Public Affairs would work to get the District in front of legislative staff members and educate them on the District's operations. Trustee Schnell asked when they think that availability might open up. Ms. Enciso stated that they keep hearing mid-year, unless AB 35 passes. The Board asked if the \$10 billion is not spent in the budget year, can it carry over? Ms. Enciso answered that it is multi-year and is there until it is used.

Vice Chair Schnell voiced a concern that we could be spending this retainer with no hope of getting funds if Proposition 4 never materializes. GM Deutsch confirmed that it is a risk. There is no guarantee that we will be able secure any grant funding. However, the Legislators are well aware and supportive of the Veterans project.

Of the \$10 billion from Proposition 4, \$400 million is available annually and the District would be competing with the entire State for a share of those funds. Ms. Enciso said that it is important to act before those funds become available. The District will need to have projects identified and researched so you are ready to act when the funds are available.

GM Deutsch thanked Ms. Enciso for being on the call and providing her input. Ms. Enciso left the meeting at this time.

GM Deutsch stated that Rojas Public affairs was able to secure \$1 million for Coachella Cemetery District for cemetery road construction. But we do already have good relationships with our legislators. GM Deutsch stated that we can also rely on CSDA's Chris Palmer. He is the Senior Public Affairs Field Coordinator for the Southern Network.

Trustee Marroquin-Waldram suggested that the District contact Townsend Public Affairs, adding that they helped secure a heli-hydrant for Yorba Linda.

Vice Chair Schnell stated that perhaps down the road we could consider this, but right now it does not make sense for the District financially. Vice Chair Schnell suggested that this be tabled and the rest of the Board agreed.

GM Deutsch requested that the Board return to New Business, Item C at this time.

C. Periodic Review of Board Policies

GM Deutsch stated that over the next few months, staff will be reviewing all of the Board policies and recommending updates as needed. Staff has completed their review of the Interment Policies from Article 170 and have attached those policies with recommended changes highlighted. GM Deutsch recommends that the Board review the attached policies and adopt a resolution approving them. GM Deutsch explained that for the Interment Policies there were no changes being proposed that would require the review of legal counsel.

MOTION: of Vice Chair Schnell, seconded by Trustee Marroquin-Waldram and carried by a vote of 4-0, adopted Orange County Cemetery District Resolution 2026-01, approving the amendments to the various policies for Article 170.

E. Gypsum Canyon Cemetery Development – Anaheim Public Utilities Added Facilities Authorization

GM Deutsch stated that the attached letter from the Anaheim Public Utilities is basically the reverse of a “will serve” letter. We are authorizing the electrical and water work to be done and it is the first major step to get us going on the site. The overall cost that is estimated to be \$10.3 million, will be split between the Veterans and the District, but initially it is the District that will need to pay the \$3 million down payment approximately 30 to 60 days before the contracts are released.

GM Deutsch also noted that the utilities are planned for maximum capacity anticipating a fully developed project that will be completed many years from now. The city can justify this, because by extending these utilities to our site they are also expanding their own infrastructure.

He also explained to the Board that during original discussions that started over two years ago, the estimated cost was about \$15 million. However, Anaheim Public Utilities is taking on some of these costs since it is also benefitting them as well. GM Deutsch stated that we anticipate the \$3 million will be due in May or June. In the next two months we will be taking action to transfer funds from CalTrust in anticipation of this transfer. Our hope is by that time, the County will have committed to paying the Veterans share of that so the District would pay \$1.5 million and the County would pay the other \$1.5 million. We will likely bring the Cal Trust transfer before the Trustees at the April Board Meeting.

In regards to our construction loan, the District is required to spend \$10 million of its own funds before we can draw on the loan. We have already spent about \$3.5 million on the project that can be counted toward that \$10 million. The Anaheim Public Utilities down payment will also go toward that.

GM Deutsch also stated that Anaheim Public Utilities will have all the responsibility for managing the contract, getting bids, and supervising the work. The District won't have to do anything.

MOTION: of Vice Chair Schnell, seconded by Trustee Marroquin-Waldram and carried by a vote of 4-0, authorized the General Manager to execute the Anaheim Public Utilities Added Facilities Letter.

ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS - None

BOARD COMMENTS

A. Garden of Innocence Service, Jan. 24, 2026 at 10:00 a.m., El Toro Memorial Park
GM Deutsch said that the Garden of Innocence held a service for 6 babies on Saturday, January 24th. They presented staff with a certificate commemorating the ten-year anniversary that the Garden of Innocence was established at El Toro Memorial Park.

B. ISDOC Quarterly Luncheon, Jan. 29, 2026 at 11:30 a.m., Fountain Valley
Trustee Kelly Rivers said that Luis Tapia, the Executive Officer with OC LAFCO was the keynote speaker. She was also sad to report that Paul Mesmer, President of Surfside Colony Community Services District passed away. Paul was a 1st Vice President of ISDOC and was active with CSDA.

GM Deutsch also reported that MUZEO held a historical tour at Anaheim Cemetery on Saturday, January 24th. Cynthia Ward was going to host the tour, but could not attend due to illness. Melanie Goss and Ann Nepsa stepped in to lead the tour in Cynthia's absence. There were about 15 to 20 people who attended the tour and it lasted about two hours.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. California Association of Public Cemeteries, Annual Conference, Garden Grove, March 19-21, 2026

GM Deutsch said that he will be attending this event along with Vice Chair Schnell, Trustee Rivers, Cemetery Manager Julio Amarillas, and Cemetery Assistants Robert Hernandez, Andriana Tristan-Losey, and Kim Eazell. Trustee Marroquin-Waldram and Chair Hatch also stated that they would like to attend. Trustee Marroquin-Waldram stated that since we are the featured District, we should give away cookies. She has a place in mind. GM Deutsch and Trustee Rivers stated that there are usually 180 to 200 people attending. GM Deutsch said he would reach out to CAPC to get a better head count, so we make sure we order enough.

B. CSDA Legislative Days, April 7-8, 2026, Sacramento, CA

GM Deutsch asked if any of the Trustees were interested in attending this event. No one was interested at this time.

GM Deutsch also mentioned that Cemetery Manager, Julio Amarillas would be attending the SDRMA Spring Safety Day in March.

Brenda Manriquez stated that she had participated in an excellent live webinar on January 29th through CSDA titled “Micro-Storytelling for Public Sector Impact”. She highly recommended it, if it becomes available again.

The next regular meeting will be held on **Tuesday, March 3, 2026** CA 92630.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

CHAIR

BOARD SECRETARY