

City of Weslaco

"The City on the Grow"



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Leonardo Olivares, City Manager

Press Release

For Immediate Release:
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Weslaco Discloses Incomplete Records at City Cemetery *Investigation Launched to Redress Policy and Personnel*

Weslaco, TX – Today the City of Weslaco discloses findings of inconsistent and incomplete recordkeeping at its municipal cemetery. Sensitive to the strict governance of the state Health and Safety Code which regulates Cemeteries and Crematories, the City conveyed to the Offices of the Hidalgo County District Attorney and Sheriff its initial findings for further investigation.

"State law requires every cemetery to maintain records of each interment, identifying the remains and the plot," said Leonardo Olivares, City Manager. "Following the recent transition of employees assigned to the supervision and operation of our City Cemetery, when allegations of wrongdoing were reported on February 21, 2011, we found some incomplete documentation as well as other documentation inconsistent with financial records. At minimum, this constitutes a violation of the City's Personnel Policies and Procedures and we fear that it may constitute a violation of State Health and Safety Code."

In accordance with the Personnel Policy, prompt disciplinary actions have been taken to dismiss employees then responsible for Cemetery administration. Additionally, the initial discovery of that internal investigation, including limited files and sworn affidavits, have been delivered to county law enforcement agencies for determination of any criminal misconduct.

Meanwhile, the City revised its operating procedures in compliance with the state Health and Safety Code and is in the process of validating all Warranty Deeds on the sale of every plot dating back to 1929. As plots are being matched to appropriate documentation, effective immediately the City will require proof of ownership on any burials or reburials at the municipal cemeteries.

The City of Weslaco considers any credible allegations of impropriety seriously and takes the appropriate action to maintain the highest ethical standards. Commenting on personnel matters is not proper because employees' rights must be protected. Any further questions should be directed to city legal counsel.

"We assure the public that the City will inventory every grave to assure proper accounting for all our residents," said Olivares. "If the public has any concerns or questions, please contact Oscar Garcia, Public Facilities Department Director, at (956) 973-3146."

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