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JAN 08 2021

**FRIENDS OF PIONEER CEMETERY**

Salem Pioneer Cemetery Endowed Fund c/o The Salem Foundation  
Pioneer Trust Bank, N. A., PO Box 2305, Salem OR 97308

SALEM LEGAL DEPT

Website: [www.salempioneer cemetery.org](http://www.salempioneer cemetery.org)

January 8, 2021

To: The Honorable Chuck Bennett, Mayor of Salem,  
and the Salem City Council

Subject: January 11 Council Meeting Agenda Item 6.a.  
Additional Information regarding a potential throughfare affecting  
Salem Pioneer Cemetery

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Living and working under the persistent tension of conflicting objectives is neither healthy nor productive for those who would be most directly affected by the Pioneer Cemetery throughfare proposal presented once more for consideration of the Salem City Council. To resolve the long-running issue definitively would be a benefit to all concerned. As City staff has recognized, each stakeholder group is entitled to respect for its legitimate concerns.<sup>1</sup>

I want to make plain our purpose in having sponsored a gathering of petitions that yielded 250 signatures in opposition to the non-specific concept of a public throughfare across Salem Pioneer Cemetery. The Friends of Pioneer Cemetery has a constituency that, to many, may seem an abstract quantity. But it consists of more than the descendants of pioneers and faithful donors to the endowed fund created for the City's benefit. Our petition drive of the last two months was intended to demonstrate that our constituency is broader than the neighborhood, broader, even, than Salem and the Mid-Willamette Valley. We wanted policy makers to tally the voices not only of pioneer descendants and donors, but the representatives of veterans' organizations, patriotic societies, civic organizations, and our historical database users who care seriously about protecting the integrity of the historic cemetery and graves of the interred.

The Salem Comprehensive Park System Master Plan Update (January 2013) that was adopted unanimously by the City Council on April 22, 2013, incorporated a brief but crucial distinction for Pioneer Cemetery (17 acres) among the system's five Historical Areas. Definition of the classification, pages 25-26, states:

Allowed uses in historical areas may be limited or restricted to conserve the resource.  
Elements of historic sites vary widely, and each individual site will need to be evaluated for allowable use.

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<sup>1</sup> Friends of Pioneer Cemetery volunteers help the City raise the level of maintenance and care of Pioneer Cemetery as auxiliary groundskeepers. We maintain records of operations and a widely-used online biographical database. We conduct marker and monument repairs and build a dedicated endowed fund with the support of our donors that provides the City annually with proceeds that, since 1999, have totaled \$190,392.28.

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Pioneer Cemetery is unique within the park system and the historical area classification. It is an active burial ground and a historic cultural landmark recognized under Salem Revised Code as a Goal 5 resource and a City of Salem Historic Landmark. Management protocols and allowable uses for this site are different from those of traditional city parks.

Participants in the long-running public debate on the pathway concept will recognize that, as a Salem Goal 5 Resource, Pioneer Cemetery is to be accorded a level of review under City ordinance and Statewide Land Use Planning Rules. When Land Use Planning Goals, such as Goal 5 (Natural Resources, Scenic and Historic Areas, and Open Spaces) and Goal 12 (Safe, Convenient and Economic Transportation System), are in conflict, the local government has three policy choices: preserve the resource, allow proposed uses that conflict with it, or strike some sort of a balance between the resource and the uses that would conflict with it. If Council chooses to adopt a plan for realizing the throughfare concept, the review process will be fulfilled.

Episodes of vandalism are vivid in memory for those who witnessed recurring destruction when the cemetery was open on three sides and regular management was interrupted. We volunteers have never assumed residents of neighborhoods adjoining the cemetery transiting a footpath in the manner in which a pedestrian-only path is intended would be the perpetrators of acts of vandalism. What is of concern to us is the likelihood of unintended consequences should a pathway be put through. We sympathize with residential neighbors on the opposite side of our north boundary whose privacy would be compromised by a stream of passers-by coming and going through their precinct. Once a pathway is open, users of other transit modes would likely want to join the flow. It is the occasional person not willing to observe posted rules and the person more rare yet, who, taking advantage of point of access in less public view, could enter conveniently with misuse of the grounds in mind.

Finally, safety hazards and an increased maintenance burden for the City are other consequences that worry us. The tall, stacked shaft monuments are weighty but fragile in that the mortar that holds the components together has disintegrated in the majority that are yet to be secured. Though the City has been extremely fortunate in having no serious injury to report concerning unescorted children playing in the path of a falling monument, such misfortunes have happened elsewhere. The cemetery's scenic assets in stately great White oaks are failing at an accelerated rate. The City has had to undertake intricate and expensive removal of sudden oak collapses three times in the last year and a half. The trend is likely to continue. By sheer luck of the failures-without-warning occurring, by chance, mostly outside of public open hours, visitors and workers have escaped harm so far. The number of damaged monuments to be repaired after these events grows. These are not idle concerns that we have about adding an appreciable flow of public transiting into the mix. The west boundary lane, which appears to be the notional site for a throughfare is the main avenue of access for motorized visitor and maintenance vehicles.

Respectfully,

*Elisabeth Walton Potter*

Friends of Pioneer Cemetery

C. RONALD AND JOYCE M. PETERS

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SALEM LEGAL DEPT

January 7, 2021

To: The Honorable Chuck Bennett, Mayor of Salem  
and Members of the Salem City Council

Re: January 11 Council Meeting , Agenda Item 6a

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am writing as a resident of Ward 7 and as a multi-term past secretary of the former South Salem Neighborhood Association subsequently reorganized as Southwest Association of Neighbors (SWAN). I am also a member of Chemeketa Chapter, National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution (N.S.D.A.R.), and I want to share with you my perspective on the historical significance of Salem Pioneer Cemetery and why the cemetery should be protected.

The N.S.D.A.R. is a patriotic society well known for its mission to honor those who have served in the past to defend the United States and uphold its founding principles. The old cemetery founded as Odd Fellows Rural Cemetery is the final resting place of those who played important roles in developing Oregon's Provisional, Territorial, and early State governments. In the 1930s, Chemeketa Chapter members under the leadership of Mrs. Edwin Jory conducted an early on-the-ground survey of burial monuments that remains an important part of the cemetery record today. In the same period, Multnomah Chapter, D.A.R., affixed bronze commemorative tablets to the grave markers of four men buried in the cemetery who voted at Champoege to form the Provisional Government of Oregon on May 2, 1843. Over the years, the commemorative plaques were stolen from two of the grave markers by vandals. In 2018, I had the honor of organizing a Chemeketa Chapter project to restore distinction to the monuments of Rev. David Leslie and Dr. William H. Willson by installing bronze plaques replicas as gifts to the City of Salem.

In 2020, the Tabitha Moffatt Brown Chapter, N.S.D.A.R., led an initiative, which our Chemeketa Chapter joined, to place a plaque on the grave marker of Tabitha Brown, co-founder of Tualatin Academy, forerunner to Pacific University. Tabitha raised a large family that joined the Oregon Trail migration and was buried in Salem's Pioneer Cemetery. She was designated the Pioneer Mother Figure of Oregon by the State Legislative Assembly in 1987 and a bronze plaque was placed on her headstone. Today, our newly dedicated additional plaque on the base of the headstone celebrates Tabitha as the daughter of a patriot soldier of the Revolutionary War.

I am one of many living in and around Salem and elsewhere who have a deep appreciation of the pioneer generations at rest in Salem Pioneer Cemetery. We hope the City will continue to do all that it can to protect the monuments of our founding government leaders and pioneers from the kind of vandalism that was prevalent in the post war period after regular oversight of the cemetery lapsed.

Sincerely,

  
Joyce M. Peters