

County of Fresno
Board of Supervisors
RESPONSE TO THE
2022-23
FRESNO COUNTY GRAND JURY
FINAL REPORT #1



**Veterans Liberty Cemetery: We Don't Know Them All but We Owe Them All
The Cemetery is not Being Adequately Maintained**

Please find below the Fresno County Board of Supervisors' response to the 2022-23 Grand Jury Final Report No. 1 findings and recommendations. The County thanks the Grand Jury for its investigation and recommendations related to Veterans Liberty Cemetery (VLC).

FINDINGS

- F2. The irrigation system is not adequate to provide consistent water to the entire cemetery. This should be resolved when the reclaimed water irrigation system is installed in 2023/2024.**

Response:

As stated above, consistent water to the entire cemetery should be achieved when the reclaimed water irrigation system is installed.

- F3. There are no funds allocated specifically for VLC in the Fresno County budget.**

Response:

The Department of Public Works and Planning is given a Net County Cost allocation specifically for the Parks Org 7910 every year. VLC is part of the County-maintained park inventory and is included in the maintenance rotation along with the rest of the County of Fresno maintained parks acreage.

- F5. The cinder block wall surrounding the water tank is in disrepair. This is unsightly and hazardous.**

Response:

The Department of Public Works and Planning will be asked to provide a proposal with cost estimate for this work.

- F6. The Fresno County Board of Supervisors recently approved the use of ARPA funds for reclaimed water for VLC. After the Grand Jury initiated this investigation, this funding was approved.**

Response:

As stated above, ARPA funding for reclaimed water for VLC has been approved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. The Fresno County Board of Supervisors should approve one-time funding for the improvements necessary at VLC by December 31, 2023. (F2)**

Response:

The County of Fresno allocated one-time funding for VLC in FY 19/20 within Org 2540 and FY 20/21 within Org 8867 (Capital Projects – Parks). The Department of Public Works and Planning was charged with completing the VLC project identified in the one-time funding allocations. In addition, as stated above, the Board of Supervisors also approved ARPA money to be utilized for VLC in FY 22/23. The Department of Public Works and Planning is also responsible for completing the projects identified for the VLC ARPA allocation. The County Administrative Office is currently working with the Department of Public Works and Planning to identify one-time funding needs that will include projects/equipment that will benefit VLC.

- R6. The Fresno County Board of Supervisors should adopt a separate annual budget for the VLC by December 31, 2023. (F1)(F3)**

Response:

The County of Fresno allocates a Net County Cost allocation for all County-maintained park acreage including VLC. Doing so as a larger budget allocation cuts overhead and administrative costs. County of Fresno plans to continue these standard accounting practices and assist the Department of Public Works and Planning to identify priority areas, including VLC.

- R8. The Director of Public Works and Planning or the Fresno County Board of Supervisors should have the cinder block wall repaired by July 31, 2023. (F5)**

Response:

As mentioned above, the Department of Public Works and Planning will be asked to provide a proposal with cost estimate for this work.

This concludes the Board of Supervisors' comments on the Findings and Recommendations of the Fresno County Grand Jury Report No. 1.



County of Fresno

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND PLANNING
STEVEN E. WHITE, DIRECTOR

May 31, 2023

The Honorable David Kalemkarian, Presiding Judge
Fresno County Superior Court
1100 Van Ness Avenue
Fresno, CA 93724-0002

Subject: Fresno County Grand Jury Report No. 1:
Veterans Liberty Cemetery: We Don't Know Them All but We Owe Them All
The Cemetery is not Being Adequately Maintained

Judge Kalemkarian:

Please find below the Fresno County Department of Public Works and Planning's response to the 2022-23 Grand Jury Final Report No. 1 findings and recommendations. The County thanks the Grand Jury for its investigation and recommendations related to Veterans Liberty Cemetery.

FINDINGS

F1. There are insufficient tools, equipment and employees available to maintain the cemetery. This has caused the cemetery to become neglected, which is disrespectful to the veterans who are buried there.

Response:

The Parks unit within the Public Works and Planning Department is funded by the County General Fund. In the 2023/24 County Budget, the Department has included the additional resources to increase maintenance frequency.

F4. The locked restrooms are repeatedly vandalized. The restrooms have been boarded up and there is no access available.

Response:

The existing restroom structure has become a draw for vandalism and the unhoused. The Department has included funding in the requested 2023/24 County recommended budget the complete removal of the restrooms.

F5. The cinder block wall surrounding the water tank is in disrepair. This is unsightly and hazardous.

Response:

The Department has submitted a funding request to the County Administrative Office for inclusion in the 2023/24 County Budget.

ADMINISTRATION

2220 Tulare Street, Sixth Floor / Fresno, California 93721 / Phone (559) 600-4078 / FAX (559) 600-4548
The County of Fresno is an Equal Opportunity Employer

F7. There appears to be no consistent coordination between Fresno County Parks Department and organizations who are interested in donating time and/or funds to VLC.

Response:

The Department has added additional staff resources with active public outreach and coordination between parties interested in donating time to the cemetery.

F8. Several dead trees along the cemetery walkways were hazardous to people who visit the cemetery; this has been rectified by removal of the trees by the Fresno County tree crews.

Response:

Addressed; the trees were removed.

F9. There was a lack of adequate signage directing visitors to VLC. This has been corrected, the signs are now updated, and there are plans to provide more directional signs from Hwy 99.

Response:

Addressed; the signage has been updated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R2. The Director of Public Works and Planning should obtain bids for outsourcing the maintenance of VLC by December 31, 2023. The Grand Jury feels that outsourcing could be a cost saving measure. (F1)

Response:

The Department has solicited and received multiple bids from landscape contractors for maintenance work at the Cemetery. The Department is currently evaluating these bids.

R3. The Director of Public Works and Planning should explore the option of replacing cemetery sod with low maintenance pebble/rock by September 30, 2023. The Grand Jury feels that this could be a cost saving measure because it would reduce the need for full time maintenance and reduce the use of water. (F1) (F2) (F3).

Response:

The Department evaluated the use of hardscape and rock material at the Cemetery and has determined replacing the sod will negatively alter the character of the Cemetery.

R4. The Director of Public Works and Planning should assign sufficient staff to adequately maintain the cemetery on a consistent basis by December 31, 2023. (F1).

Response:

The Department has submitted a staffing request to the County Administrative Office for inclusion in the 2023/24 County Budget.

R5. The Director of Public Works and Planning should have the outdoor restrooms removed due to ongoing vandalism by December 31, 2023. (F4)

Response:

The Department has submitted a funding request to the County Administrative office for inclusion in the 2023/24 County Budget.

- R7. The Director of Public Works and Planning should have staff purchase the necessary tools and equipment specific to the needs of VLC. These tools should be maintained in working order and stored at the cemetery by December 31, 2023. (F1)

Response:

The Department has submitted a funding request to the County Administrative office for inclusion in the 2023/24 County Budget.

- R8. The Director of Public Works and Planning or the Fresno County Board of Supervisors should have the cinder block wall repaired by July 31, 2023. (F5)

Response:

The Department has submitted a funding request to the County Administrative Office for inclusion in the 2023/24 County Budget.

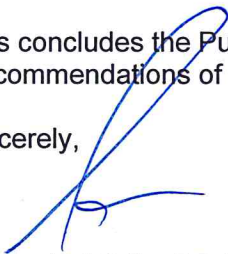
- R9. The Director of Public Works and Planning should appoint a current employee to be a liaison with volunteer groups who are interested in supporting VLC by July 31, 2023. (F7)

Response:

The Department has assigned its PIO and the Parks Manager to this task.

This concludes the Public Works and Planning Department comments on the Findings and Recommendations of the Fresno County Grand Jury Report No. 1.

Sincerely,



Steven E. White, PE, LS, Director
Department of Public Works and Planning