The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration (NCA) announces the preparation and availability of the Final Site-Specific Environmental Assessment (SEA) and the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the VA’s Proposed Action to construct and operate Phase 1 of the Puerto Rico National Cemetery Replacement on approximately 50-acres of the VA’s approximately 275-acre property located at 11.2 km PR 137 in Morovis, Puerto Rico. The Phase 1 cemetery would provide approximately 14,000 interment sites, supporting physical infrastructure, and require approximately 30 months to construct. Full details of the Proposed Action are provided in the Final SEA. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to continue to enable the National Cemetery Association (NCA) to provide eligible Veterans and their families with a National Cemetery of sufficient size and capacity to serve the projected needs in Puerto Rico for the next 10 years. The existing Puerto Rico National Cemetery located in Bayamón is anticipated to reach full in-ground interment capacity by 2022 and full columbarium capacity by 2030. The Proposed Action is needed to meet the NCA’s goal of providing eligible Veterans with reasonable access to VA burial options.

Prior to completing the Final SEA, the VA completed a Draft SEA that documented the potential environmental impacts associated with implementing the Proposed Action and the avoidance and management measures to be implemented to ensure potential minor adverse impacts would not increase to a significantly adverse level. Both the Final SEA and Draft SEA were prepared according to the regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA, Public Law 91-190, 42 USC 4321-4347 January 1, 1970, amendments, and VA’s Implementing Regulations (38 CFR Part 26). The Draft SEA was published for a 30-day public review period, which began when the Notice of Availability (NOA) published in El Nuevo Dia and Primera Hora on March 17, 18, 23 and 24, 2017. Additionally, regulatory agencies were notified by letter of the availability of the Draft SEA. Comments received were not in opposition to the Proposed Action and have been incorporated in the Final SEA.

Upon review of the Final SEA, the VA concludes that implementing the Proposed Action would not constitute a major federal action that would have a significantly adverse impact on the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(C) of NEPA of 1969. Accordingly, the VA has finalized a FONSI, which incorporates the Final SEA by reference, and concludes that the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The FONSI completes the NEPA review process for this Proposed Action. The Final SEA and FONSI are available for review at http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/EA.asp. For further information and/or a copy of the Final SEA or FONSI, please contact: Mr. Glenn Elliott, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Construction & Facilities Management, 425 I (eye) Street, NW, Room 6W47a, Washington, D.C. 20001; fax to 202-632-5832; or e-mail at Glenn.Elliott@va.gov. Please reference “Puerto Rico National Cemetery Replacement” in any correspondence.
NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY (NOA)
Draft Site-Specific Environmental Assessment
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Proposed Construction and Operation of the Puerto Rico National Cemetery Replacement
Morovis, Puerto Rico

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announces the preparation and availability of a Draft Site-Specific Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the VA’s Proposed Action to construct and operate Phase 1 of the proposed Puerto Rico National Cemetery Replacement on approximately 50-acres of the VA’s approximately 250-acre property located at 11.2 km PR 137 in Morovis, Puerto Rico. The Proposed Action Phase 1 cemetery would provide approximately 14,000 interment sites, supporting physical infrastructure, and require approximately 30 months to construct. Full details of the Proposed Action are provided in the Draft SEA. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to continue to enable the National Cemetery Association (NCA) to provide eligible Veterans and their families with a National Cemetery of sufficient size and capacity to serve the projected needs in Puerto Rico for the next 10 years. The existing Puerto Rico National Cemetery located in Bayamón is anticipated to reach full in-ground interment capacity by 2022 and full columbarium capacity by 2030. The Proposed Action is needed to meet the NCA’s goal of providing eligible Veterans with reasonable access to VA burial options.

The Draft SEA has been prepared in accordance with the with the regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), (Public Law 91-190, 42 USC 4321-4347 January 1, 1970), amendments, and VA’s Implementing Regulations (38 CFR Part 26). The Draft SEA is available to view/download electronically at http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/EA.asp, or view in printed form at the Bayamón National Cemetery and Morovis Town Hall. A 30-day public comment period to review and comment on the Draft SEA will begin on the date this notice is published. Comments received will be considered and addressed in the Final SEA.

Comments or questions may be directed in writing to: Mr. Glenn Elliott, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Construction & Facilities Management, 425 I (eye) Street, NW, Room 6W417a, Washington, D.C. 20001; by fax to 202-632-5832; or e-mail at Glenn.Elliott@va.gov. Please reference “Puerto Rico National Cemetery Replacement Draft SEA” in any correspondence. All comments on the Draft SEA are requested within 30 days of the publication of this notice.
AVISO DE DISPONIBILIDAD

YECTO DE EVALUACIÓN AMBIENTAL ESPECÍFICA PARA EL SITIO (SEA)
DEPARTAMENTO DE ASUNTOS DE VETERANOS DE LOS EE. UU.

PROPUESTA DE CONSTRUCCIÓN Y OPERACIÓN DEL REEMPLAZO

DEL CEMENTERIO NACIONAL DE PUERTO RICO MOROVIS, PUERTO RICO

AFIDAVIT

Yo, Sonia Elena. Díaz Santiago, habiendo prestado el debido juramento declaro:

Que soy Representante del periódico "EL NUEVO DIA" que se publica en Guaynabo, P.R.; que en las ediciones de este periódico correspondientes a los días:

23 Y 24 DE MARZO DE 2017

Publicidad al edicto expedido por

DEPARTAMENTO DE ASUNTOS DE VETERANOS DE LOS EE. UU.

... arriba mencionado y copia del cual se une al presente afidavit para que forme parte del mismo.

Guaynabo, P.R. 27 marzo 2017

No. 14127 del Registro.

Jurado y reconocido ante mí por Sonia Elena Díaz Santiago, vecina de Bayamón, mayor de edad, soltera, representante del periódico "EL NUEVO DIA", a quien doy fe de conocer personalmente,

Guaynabo, P.R. 27 marzo 2017

NOTARIO
AVISO DE DISPONIBILIDAD
PROYECTO DE EVALUACIÓN AMBIENTAL ESPECIFICA PARA EL SITIO (SEA)
DEPARTAMENTO DE ASUNTOS DE VETERANOS DE LOS EE. UU.

DEL CEMENTERIO NACIONAL DE PUERTO RICO MOROVIS, PUERTO RICO

AFIDAVIT

Yo, Sonia Elena Díaz Santiago, habiendo prestado el debido juramento declaro:

Que soy Representante del periódico “PRIMEA HORA” que se publica en Guaynabo, P.R.; que en las 25 de este periódico correspondientes a los días:

24 y 25 de Marzo de 2017

-publicidad al edicto expedido por

DEPARTAMENTO DE ASUNTOS DE VETERANOS DE LOS EE. UU.

- lo arriba mencionado y copia del cual se une al presente afidavit para que forme parte del mismo.

Guaynabo, P.R. 27 marzo 2017

Jurado y reconocido ante mí por Sonia Elena Díaz Santiago, vecina de Bayamón, mayor de edad, soltera, vecina del periódico “PRIMERA HORA”, a quien doy fe de conocer personalmente,

Guaynabo, P.R. 27 marzo 2017

[Señalado el nombre del notario]

[Señalado el nombre del notario]
NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY (NOA)

DRAFT SITE-SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF THE PUERTO RICO NATIONAL CEMETERY REPLACEMENT
MOROVIS, PUERTO RICO

AFFIDAVIT

I, SONIA ELENA DIAZ SANTIAGO, of legal age, SINGLE employee and resident of BAYAMON Puerto Rico, do solemnly swear that I am a employee for "PRIMERA HORA", a newspaper general circulation in the Island of Puerto Rico, and I am duly authorized to declare that in the edition of newspaper corresponding MARCH 18, 2017, the following Legal Notice was published:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

In witness whereof and upon request of those concerned, I swear to and sign the present in Guaynabo, P.R. this 20th day of March 2017.

Affidavit No. 13587

Acknowledged and sworn to before me by SONIA ELENA DIAZ SANTIAGO of legal age, single and resident of BAYAMON, Puerto Rico, as representative of "PRIMERA HORA", whom I know personally.

GUAYNABO, P.R. 20th March 2017

[Notary Public Signature]
NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY (NOA)

DRAFT SITE-SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF THE PUERTO RICO NATIONAL CEMETARY REPLACEMENT MOROVIS, PUERTO RICO

AFFIDAVIT

I, SONIA ELENA DIAZ SANTIAGO, of legal age, SINGLE employee and resident of Bayamon, Puerto Rico, do solemnly swear that I am an employee for "EL NUEVO DIA", a newspaper circulation in the Island of Puerto Rico, and I am duly authorized to declare that in the edition of paper corresponding MARCH 18, 2017, the following Legal Notice was published:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

In witness whereof and upon request of those concerned, I swear to and sign the present in P.R. this __________ day of __________, 2017.

[Signature]

Affidavit No. 13598

Acknowledged and sworn to before me by SONIA ELENA DIAZ SANTIAGO of legal age, resident of BAYAMON, Puerto Rico, as representative of "EL NUEVO DIA", whom I know

GUAYNABO, P.R. __________, 2017

[Signature]

NOTARY PUBLIC
DEPARTAMENTO DE ASUNTOS DE VETERANOS (VA)

NOTIFICACION DE REUNION DE ALCANCE PUBLICO
PARA LA PROPUESTA DE CONSTRUCCION
Y OPERACION DEL ANEXO
DEL CEMENTERIO NACIONAL DE PUERTO RICO,
MOROVIS, PUERTO RICO

AFIDAVIT

Yo, Brenda Marin Cruz, habiendo prestado el debido juramento declaro:

Que soy Representante del periódico “EL NUEVO DÍA” que se publica en Guaynabo, P.R.; que en las ediciones de este periódico correspondientes a los días:

21, 22 Y 23 DE JULIO DE 2016

se dio publicidad al edicto expedido por

DEPARTAMENTO DE ASUNTOS DE VETERANOS (VA)

en el caso arriba mencionado y copia del cual se une al presente afidavit para que forme parte del mismo.

Guaynabo, P.R. 26 JUL. 2016

Afidavit No. 84879 del Registro.

Jurado y reconocido ante mi por Brenda Marin Cruz, vecina de Toa Alta, mayor de edad, casada, Representante del periódico “EL NUEVO DÍA”, a quien debo de conocer personalmente,

Guaynabo, P.R. 26 JUL. 2016

[Señalizaciones legales]

NOTARIO
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME (First and Last)</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Telephone/Email</th>
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Comment:

Me encantó la idea de que en Morovis se haga el Cementerio Nacional. El diseño es muy precioso y me sintió muy galardonado de que se construya aquí en Morovis.
Gracias Por todo
Bueno Presentación
Y Información
Para la Familia
De los Veteranos
ADMINISTRACIÓN DE VETRANOS

RE:

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY
ACT (NEPA) SCOPING MEETING
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SITE
SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA)

******************************************************************************

PREGUNTAS Y RESPUESTAS DE LA REUNIÓN PÚBLICA

FECHA : 26 de julio de 2016
HORA : 6:00 P.M.
CLIENTE : ADMINISTRACIÓN DE VETERANOS
DIRECCIÓN : Calle Dorrance 10
Suite 700
Providence, Rhode Island
CELEBRADA EN : Casa Alcaldía de Morovis
Anfiteatro
Morovis, Puerto Rico

COMPARECIENTES

PANEL:

Sr. Glenn Elliott - VA CFM
Sr. Bryan Bodner - VA CFM
Sr. Juan Nieves - Director del Cementerio

SERVICIOS DE INTÉRPRETE:

Sr. José Rosado Santiago - Intérprete
Sr. Marcos Díaz Rivera - Intérprete en Cabina
Sra. Julliett Díaz Rivera - Interprete en Cabina
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM THE PUBLIC MEETING

DATE : July 26th, 2016
TIME : 6:00 P.M.
CLIENT : VETERANS ADMINISTRATION AFFAIRS
ADDRESS : 10 Dorrance Street
            Suite 700
            Providence, Rhode Island
HELD AT : Morovis City Hall
            Amphitheater
            Morovis, Puerto Rico

APPEARANCES

PANEL:

Mr. Andrew Glucksman  -  Mabbett & Associates, Inc.
Mr. Glenn Elliott      -  VA CFM
Mr. Bryan Bodner       -  VA CFM
Mr. Juan Nieves        -  Cemetery Director

INTERPRETER SERVICES:

Mr. José Rosado Santiago - Interpreter
Mr. Marcos Diaz Rivera  -  Interpreter in Cabin
MR. JULLIETT DÍAZ RIVERA - Interpreter in Cabin

COURT REPORTER:

Lissette Guardiola Merced

* * * * *

PROCEEDINGS

(6:00 P.M.)

MR. SALGADO:

I’ve got a question. How are you doing? My name is José Salgado. My father is a veteran, you know, from Korea. I’m interested because my father is in Bayamón, you know, he rests in peace in Bayamón. I want to transfer him to here to Morovis, because I live here. What do I have to do with that? And my mother, is she going to get benefits when she passes away? That’s the only thing I have, my mother, to take care of her. I don’t know what’s going to happen, so I’ll be interested about that.

MR. ELLIOTT:

I’m going to have Juan answer that because he is the director at Bayamón. He can help you out.

MR. SALGADO:

And then I’m going to pass away. I don’t have no kids and know whatever the hell. I don’t care about me. I care about my mother.
MR. NIEVES:

So, as soon as the new cemetery opens here in Morovis, if it’s open and we are ready to accept and do interments, even thou your father is in Bayamón, your mother can be interred here. So you don’t need to worry about, you know, if she has to be with your father in Bayamón. Also, all you have to do is request through our office in Bayamón a disinterment and we will provide you the forms that you need to fill out. I will approve you to disinter your father from Bayamón to transfer him to Morovis.

I mean, we have seen that before when the cemetery, the state cemetery in Aguadilla opened, we had the same situation from people from the west side that wanted to transfer their loved ones to Aguadilla. So it can be done, just come to our office. This one opens...

MR. SALGADO:

But I have to go to Bayamón to make it.

MR. NIEVES:

We can do everything by phone, fax or email. You don’t need to actually be present there until the disinterment date.

MR. SALGADO:

By my mother side, she’s a beauty thou. She also can be available to be on the National Cemetery when she
passes away?

MR. NIEVES:

If she’s the real... Was she married with your father when he died?

MR. SALGADO:

Yes, she is, her whole life.

MR. NIEVES:

As a widow, she qualifies to be buried at Bayamón, but if Morovis opens, you don’t need to take her to Bayamón. She can be buried in Morovis.

MR. SALGADO:

What about...

MR. NIEVES:

So what I mean, a veteran can be buried in Morovis and their loved ones in Bayamón.

MR. SALGADO:

What about son, like me, because...

MR. NIEVES:

Are you a veteran?

MR. SALGADO:

No. I’m not a veteran, no.

MR. NIEVES:

The cemetery is for veterans and dependents so it’s for the veteran, the wife or widow or the spouse, and minor children or adult dependent children.
MR. SALGADO:
Alright.

MR. NIEVES:
So those are the only ones who qualify to be buried in the National Cemetery.

MR. SALGADO:
I don’t care about me. I care about my mom. I love my mom. Thank you.

MR. ELLIOTT:
Sir.

MR. LARACUENTE:
My name is reverend Israel Laracuente. I have been living here in Morovis for many years. We know the sites where the cemetery is going to be established. We wonder if that was a better site that we have here in town for a cemetery and at the same time, we went to find out how are you managing to get the landscaping as a site for the Veterans Cemetery.

In my experience, for the last six months while I was at the service, I was the head of a very elite detail in New York, where I had to go to different places to bury veterans and relatives. Being the fact that we are watching all the documents that you brought to us and being the fact that we live here, live next to the site there, we know that the landscaping is not the better
landscaping to work out for a site, for a cemetery.

Now, how long will that take to get that place settled down for the cemetery? Also, it’s a rocky place. I don’t know. It’s a rocky place. I understand in my experience, I understand that where you bury somebody has to be ground, no rock. See? So most of us are very worried of how much land we are going to have there, how big is it going to be, will that be enough for the veterans on this side of the island and things like that we are thinking.

I’m in no hurry because I’ve got a site here in the town cemetery, but a lot of people get close to us and they want to find out because of the same thing that he just brought, that he has relatives and they wonder when they could bring their relatives next to them. See?

That’s a privilege and that’s a right for us, if we could have our relatives next to us. My wife said that she wants me to be buried next to my house because she wants to see me every day. She’s going to go over there to see me every day. I tell her “the first time, the second time, the third time you are going to forget about me”. It’s something that worries us, how the people that are in charge are managing to get this rocky place in a place good enough for a veteran cemetery.

I don’t know if you have the answer. We are willing
MR. ELLIOTT:

So, I’m going to go through it. Three big questions that I think you posed. One, what’s the landscaping? When you look at the site now, do you look at Bayamón, how are we going to get from there, from where we are now on that site looking like Bayamón. Part of that is the landscaping design and details that we have a team; the project manager has a team working on it laying that out page by page. There are many pages just dedicated just to trees, just to landscaping, different sizes of landscaping, the different grasses, things like that.

Now, talking about the rocks, because that’s kind of related. It’s hard to grow something really nice on a rock. When you look at that site... Or buried. When you look at that site, there’s going to be cut and there’s going to be filled to make that work. Some areas will be raised up because like you said, you need ground to bury somebody in. So, in certain areas, there will be fill to make the grave and there will be cutting and there will be cutting of rock on certain areas to great things up, so it’s smooth, so it can be built.

Now, you asked about capacity. This is one of the larger pieces of property we have. As I said, we did set aside 123 acres for preservation, but the other is
designed and laid out for burial.

Bryan, overall with the master plan, how many years is laid out? Was it a hundred?

MR. BODNER:

Yeah. It’s a hundred years, so it’s ten phases, ten years each. And as Glenn mentioned, the first phase, we’re going to provide for 14,000 burial spaces, but at the end of the hundred years, there will be approximately 89 or 90 thousand burial spaces. And that meets the needs of veterans here in Puerto Rico for the next 100 years, even with, as we talked, utilizing only half of the property. So, we have a total 250 acres, we’re going to preserve 123 acres like Glenn said, for the century carved feature that are there and we are going to develop the remaining 124 acres, but we are getting 90,000 grave sites spaces in that 124 acres. So we are using every acre that we have and it’s meeting our needs. So that’s the good news.

And I will say, reverend, we want to have you on our engineering team. You raised a lot of good points. In the challenges that we face in the design and construction, there were more than twenty sites that were looked at, as Glenn mentioned, during the site selection process and the programmatic environment assessment that we did back in 2008, 2009. So this site was selected from
among twenty sites all over Puerto Rico. It met most of
the needs, the criteria that we laid out, doesn’t meet
everything, but none of them do. This best met the
criteria for the site.

The rock that you mentioned is a challenge and as
Glenn said, most of the project we’re going to bring in,
probably, seventy-five percent fill for the project. So
we’ll have adequate depth for the grave site and we’ll
minimize as much rock excavation as we have to do, but
where we do excavate the rock, we will put in fill. It’s
an expensive proposition, but we’ll spare no cost for the
veterans.

Does that answer all your questions? The landscaping
is difficult as well. That’s going to all have to be done
within the three year construction period. So, the
contract to rebuild this will need to keep a nursery
pretty much on the site. It’ll bring in plants locally,
it’ll bring in some from, you know, other states. It’s a
challenge.

MR. LARACUENTE:

Does the organization have a, what we call a death
file. We have numbers of how many veterans are dying
yearly for the last twelve years. And also, be the fact
that we cover eight towns or more than eight towns. More
or less, we know that there is a need for a cemetery in
this area, specially. There is a need for a hospital in this area, but the first thing that we are getting is a cemetery.

We understand that Hato Tejas is almost ready to be closed because of the fact that there is not enough room for the rest of the veterans that live in the island. I don’t know if, how you are working out Aguadilla and Aguada, that is the new one that you had, but we have a lot of veterans in that area from Mayagüez, Aguadilla, all these places. So, when I’m asked about the progress of this program or this project, sometimes I don’t know what to say. See?

MR. BRYAN:

Sure. I’ll just be real briefly, we expect to be finished with the design of this project by the end of this year, December, 2016. We will then advertise the project for a contractor to build it. That would take about five months. We’ll award in May of 2017. The early turnover that Glenn mentioned, one year after 2017, May, we’ll start burials, first burials. So, May of 2018 is when it will open, essentially. And then we’ll be fully completed, the 14,000 grave sites that are mentioned by May of 2018. So that gives you a fill for the time frame.

MR. LARACUENTE:

I didn’t mention the fact of the economic situation
in Puerto Rico and be the fact that some of the veterans that are going through the same situation. So, it’s very difficult for us to find and buy a private property out of the national cemetery. But I can talk about nobody else, but I talk about myself. I’m making sure that I have enough room for my family, for my sons and I have my own insurance just in case, because we can’t depend on the Veterans Administration for, you know, to help out on all the costs and the places that we need to rest the rest of our lives. Thank you very much.

MR. BODNER:

I understand. Thank you, sir.

MR. ELLIOTT:

Thank you. Somebody else? Sir?

MR. RODRÍGUEZ:

‘Buenas tardes. Mi nombre es Jorge Rodríguez. Trabajé diez años para el cementerio. Yo creo que el que conoce aquí es Nieves’. I’ve got only one simple question. Does this co-create employ for the community?

MR. ELLIOTT:

Say that again.

MR. RODRÍGUEZ:

If this co-creates employ for the community work?

MR. ELLIOTT:

Well, it’s probable. This provides opportunities for
employment.

MR. RODRÍGUEZ:

To the community to work?

MR. ELLIOTT:

Yes.

MR. RODRÍGUEZ:

That’s the only question that I have. Thank you.

MR. ELLIOTT:

Thank you. Anyone else?

I want to thank everybody that came today.

MR. SALGADO:

Excuse me. I just want to make it ready for everything because of my mother. About the stone, if you had transfer my father, what do I have to do with the stone? It’s going to be replaced, so you will take care of veterans? I’ve got to pay for it? What do I have to do? I’ve got to keep in touch. Give me the card where I...

MR. NIEVES:

I’m handling you my business card so I actually can help you through the process, but we will request a new one for Morovis, you know, if you transfer your father to Morovis, we will take care of the one in Bayamón. That’s how we do when we do disinterments.

MR. SALGADO:

You have to pay, but I want to be...
MR. NIEVES:  
Yes.

MR. SALGADO:

...my income, how they call it, you know.

MR. NIEVES:

No, no. The Veterans Affairs, you know, will provide the mark or the headstone, the headstone. That’s my card so I can help you through the process.

MR. SALGADO:

Alright. Another, another question. I applied for the DD-214 that I need that to transfer because I never received a... I applied six months ago.

MR. NIEVES:

Due to the fact that your father is already at the cemetery, we know that he qualifies, so we don’t need for your mother, we won’t need any DD-214.

MR. SALGADO:

Alright. Thank you.

MR. ELLIOTT:

Thank you. Again, anybody else?  
I want to thank everybody that came out tonight. I want to thank the veterans that are there right now. Thank you. Have a great night. Have a safe drive home.

* * *

THIS CONCLUDES THE PUBLIC MEETING
CERTIFICATE OF COURT REPORTER

I, LISSETTE GUARDIOLA MERCED, Court Reporter, and member of Crespo & Rodríguez, Inc.:

DO HEREBY CERTIFY: That the foregoing transcript is a full, true and correct record of the testimony given which was taken down by me, and thereafter reduced to the typewritten form.

I FURTHER CERTIFY: That I am not in any way involved or interested in the outcome of said action.

WITNESSES my hand this 22nd day of August, 2016, in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

__________________________________________
LISSETTE GUARDIOLA MERCED
Court Reporter
TAQUÍGRAFO DE RÉCORD:

Sr. José E. López Calero

** ** ** **

PROCEDIMIENTOS

(6:00 P.M.)

SR. SALGADO:

Tengo una pregunta. Yo soy José Salgado. Mi padre es veterano de Corea y a mí me interesa, porque mi padre está en Bayamón, ustedes saben que está en Bayamón. Yo quiero trasladarlo aquí a Morovis, porque yo vivo aquí. ¿Qué tendría yo que hacer para poder hacer esto? Mi madre también tiene ese beneficio cuando fallezca. Yo tengo que cuidar a mi madre y no sé lo que va a suceder con ella. Así que quisiera saber cómo se puede hacer.

SR. ELLIOT:

Voy a permitirle a Juan contestar la pregunta porque él es el director de Bayamón.

SR. NIEVES:

Tan pronto como se abra el próximo cementerio aquí en Morovis, si está abierto y podemos hacer enterramientos, a pesar de que su padre está en Bayamón, su madre se puede enterrar acá, así que no necesita preocuparse de que ella tenga que estar donde está su padre en Bayamón.

También lo que necesita hacer es, solicitar, a través de nuestra oficina en Bayamón, el desenterramiento.
Tenemos los formularios y podemos exumar a su padre de Bayamón para transferirlo a Morovis. Eso lo hemos visto antes. Cuando el Cemeterio Estatal en Aguadilla abrió, tuvimos la misma situación de personas del área oeste que querían transferir sus seres queridos a Aguadilla. Así que se puede hacer, simplemente venga a nuestras oficinas.

SR. SALGADO:

¿Tengo que ir a Bayamón para hacer eso?

SR. NIEVES:

Todo también se puede hacer por teléfono, fax, correo electrónico. No hace falta que vaya en persona, hasta la fecha de exumación.

SR. SALGADO:

¿Mi madre también se puede enterrar en el Cementerio Nacional?

SR. NIEVES:

¿Ella estaba casada cuando su padre...

SR. SALGADO:

Sí, sí.

SR. NIEVES:

Como viuda ella cualifica para enterrarse en Bayamón, pero si Morovis está abierto, no tiene que llevarla a Bayamón, se puede enterrar en Morovis. Lo que quiero decir es que un veterano se puede enterrar en Morovis y el ser querido puede estar en Bayamón.
SR. SALGADO:

¿Y los hijos?

SR. NIEVES:

¿Usted es veterano?

El cementerio es para los veteranos y los dependientes. Así que es para el veterano, para la viuda o cónyuge y para los hijos menores de edad o hijos que sean dependientes adultos. Esos son los únicos que se pueden enterrar en el Cementerio Nacional.

SR. SALGADO:

Bueno, a mí no me importa en mi caso, pero sí quiero saber de mi madre.

MR. LARACUENTE:

Yo he vivido aquí en Morovis por muchos años. Nosotros sabemos que el lugar donde se va a establecer el cementerio, hemos ido allí y nos preguntamos si ese es el mejor lugar en el pueblo para un cementerio y queremos saber cómo ustedes van a lograr el paisajismo para el cementerio. Mi experiencia en los últimos seis meses que estuve en el servicio, yo era el jefe de Servicios de Cadáveres, donde yo iba a muchos sitios a enterrar a los veteranos y a sus familiares.

Siendo que estamos viendo todos los documentos que usted nos trajo y dado el hecho de que vivimos al lado del solar, pensamos que ese no es el mejor lugar para un
cementerio. ¿Cuánto va a tomar preparar ese lugar para establecer el cementerio? Es un lugar rocoso, no sé. Yo entiendo, y en mi experiencia yo entiendo que cuando se entierra alguien tiene que ser terreno y no roca. Así que la mayor parte de nosotros estamos muy preocupados de cuánta tierra vamos a tener allí. Cuán grande va a ser, si va a ser suficiente para los veteranos de esta parte de la Isla. Y ese es el tipo de cosas que nosotros estamos pensando.

Yo no estoy preocupado, porque yo tengo un lote aquí en el cementerio del pueblo. Pero algunas personas quieren saber, porque es lo mismo que él dijo, que él tiene familiares y nos preguntamos cómo va a ser, cómo poner al familiar más cerca de ellos.

Es un privilegio y es un derecho nuestro, el tener a nuestros familiares cerca nuestro. Mi esposa quiere que me entierren al lado de la casa, ella quiere verme todos los días y yo le dije: “La primera vez, la segunda vez, la tercera vez”, yo dije: “Olvídate”. Es algo que nos preocupa, cómo las personas que estan a cargo van a lograr que este lugar rocoso se convierta en un lugar apropiado para un cementerio de veteranos.

SR. ELLIOTT:

Voy a explicar 3 preguntas que usted ha hecho. La primera fue sobre el paisajismo. Si ustedes miran el lugar
y miran a Bayamón, cómo vamos a ir de donde estamos en este momento a lograr que se vea como Bayamón. Parte de esto es el diseño paisajista y los detalles que nosotros, tenemos un equipo, el director de proyecto tiene un equipo que está trabajando en esto. Se han dedicado muchas páginas, simplemente, a los árboles y al paisajismo, los distintos, las distintas yerbas, etcétera.

Ahora, hablemos sobre las piedras, porque eso está relacionado, es difícil hacer que crezcan plantas en piedra. Cuando miramos el solar, se va a cortar y se va a rellenar. Algunas áreas se van a levantar, porque como usted dijo, necesitamos terreno para poder enterrar a las personas. Así que en algunas áreas va a haber relleno y en otros lugares va a haber cortes. Se va a cortar piedras en otras áreas para que se pueda construir.

Usted preguntó sobre la capacidad. Este es uno de los solares más grandes que tenemos. Como les dijimos, nosotros separamos 123 acres para conservación, pero el resto está dedicado a los enterramientos. ¿Para cuántos años fue que se hizo, para 100?

SR. BODNER:

Sí. Cien años, así que son 10 fases de 10 años cada uno. Y la primera fase solo tendrá 14,000 enterramientos, pero luego de 100 años va haber de 80,000 a 90,000 enterramientos. Eso debería servir a Puerto Rico por los
próximos 100 años, aun utilizando la mitad del solar. Así que tenemos 250 acres, vamos a conservar 123, como el dijo, para conservar las características del carso. Pero vamos a lograr 90,000 tumbas en esos 124 acres, así que esto va a cumplir con nuestras necesidades.

Si usted estuviera en nuestro equipo de ingenieros habría levantado muchos puntos importantes que nosotros ya hemos levantado. En el 2008, 2009, se cumplió con la mayor parte de las necesidades y los criterios que ya teníamos, probablemente el 75 por ciento del relleno para el proyecto. Así que podremos tener una profundidad adecuada para las tumbas. Y eso va a minimizar la excavación de la roca, pero cuando se excave la roca, vamos a poner relleno. Así que es algo caro, pero no vamos a escatimar en gastos para los veteranos.

¿Esto contesta sus preguntas?

El paisajismo también es difícil, eso se va a tener que hacer el proceso de construcción de 3 años. Así que el contratista que construya esto, va a tener que tener un vivero y va a tener que traer plantas locales y va a tener que traer también plantas de otros lugares, pero es un reto.

SR. LARACUENTE:

Nuestra organización tiene, lo que llamamos un archivo de muertes. Hemos enumerado los veteranos que
están muriendo anualmente por los últimos 4 años y también nosotros cubrimos más de 8 pueblos. Así que nosotros sabemos que hay una necesidad de un cementerio en esta área. Hace falta un hospital en esta área, pero lo primero que nos traen es el cementerio.

Nosotros entendemos que Hato Tejas ya está listo para cerrarse, porque no hay espacio para el resto de los veteranos que viven en la Isla. No se cómo van a hacer ustedes en Aguadilla y en Aguada, el nuevo que tenían. Pero tenemos muchos veteranos en esa área de Mayagüez, Aguadilla y todos esos lugares. Así que, cuando se me pregunta sobre el progreso de este proyecto, a veces no sé qué decir.

SR. BRYAN:

Nosotros esperábamos completar el diseño del proyecto para fines de este año, en diciembre 2016. Entonces vamos a publicar el proyecto para lograr un contrato para construirlo, que eso va a tomar unos 5 meses. Se va a entregar en mayo de 2017 y un año después, mayo de 2018, vamos a comenzar con los enterramientos. Así que en mayo de 2018 va ser cuando este abra. Y luego vamos a haber completado las 14,000 tumbas, que había mencionado, para mayo de 2020. Así que eso le da una idea del tiempo que va a tomar.

SR. LARACUENTE:
Tampoco he mencionado el hecho de la economía de Puerto Rico, cómo eso va afectando a los veteranos que están pasando por esta situación. Es muy difícil para nosotros encontrar y comprar un lote que no sea en este cementerio. No puedo hablar por otros, puedo hablar por mi mismo, pero yo estoy asegurándome de tener suficiente espacio para mi familia, para mis hijos. Tengo mi propio seguro, porque no podemos depender de la Administración de Veteranos para ayudarnos con el costo y los lotes que necesitamos para el descansar de nuestras vidas. Muchas gracias.

SR. ELLIOTT:

¿Alguien más?

SR. RODRÍGUEZ:

Tengo solo una pregunta. ¿Esto va a crear empleos en la comunidad?

SR. ELLIOTT:

¿Que si esto va a dar oportunidades de empleo en la comunidad? Sí.

SR. RODRÍGUEZ:

Esa era la única pregunta que tenía.

SR. ELLIOTT:

Gracias. ¿Alguien más?

Quiero agradecerles a todos por haber venido aquí hoy.
SR. SALGADO:

¿Qué va a pasar con la lápida de mi padre, hay que reemplazarla, tengo que pagar por ella, qué tengo que hacer?

SR. NIEVES:

Le estoy entregando mi tarjeta para ayudarlo a través del proceso. Si usted transfiere su padre a Morovis, vamos a ocuparnos del de Bayamón.

SR. SALGADO:

Yo puedo pagar, pero quiero saber qué es lo que va a suceder.

SR. NIEVES:

Veteranos va a proveer la lápida. Esa es mi tarjeta, así que yo le puedo ayudar con ese proceso.

SR. SALGADO:

Otra pregunta. Yo solicité la 214, ¿necesito eso?, porque nunca la recibí. Hace seis meses que la pedí.

SR. NIEVES:

Dado que su padre ya está en el cementerio, sabemos que cualifica. Así que para su madre no va a necesitar la 214.

SR. SALGADO:

Gracias.

SR. ELLIOTT:
¿Alguien más?

Quiero agradecerles a todos por haber venido esta noche. Quiero agradecerles a los veteranos que están aquí presentes. Gracias. Pasen una buena noche y buen viaje de regreso a casa.

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SE DIO POR TERMINADA LA REUNIÓN PÚBLICA

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CERTIFICACIÓN DEL TAQUÍGRAFO

CERTIFICO: que la que antecede es la transcripción fiel y correcta del récord tomado por el suscribiente de los procedimientos habidos durante la reunión pública.

En San Juan, Puerto Rico, hoy día 25 de agosto de 2016.

JOSÉ E. LÓPEZ CALERO

Taquígrafo