



INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA
AGENDA ITEM
Assistant County Administrator /
Department of General Services

Date: May 24, 2023
To: The Honorable Board of County Commissioners
Thru: John A. Titkanich, County Administrator
 Michael Zito, Assistant County Administrator
From: Leigh Anne Uribe, Human Services Program Coordinator
Subject: Review and Update to Administrative Policy 908.1, “Indian River County Disposal of Indigent Bodies (Burial and Cremation)”

BACKGROUND:

Per Florida law, all counties are charged with the burial of unclaimed or indigent bodies at the county’s expense. The County is responsible for burying a decedent when the next of kin refuse to claim the body and are not legally responsible for the burial of the decedent. The term “indigent” refers to a person who does not have sufficient property or assets to provide for burial. The law was enacted to ensure that unclaimed or indigent bodies are properly disposed of for public health purposes.

On November 22, 2011, the Indian River County Board of County Commissioners adopted Administrative Policy 908.1, Indian River County Disposal of Indigent Bodies (Burial and Cremation), to adhere to the requirements of Chapter 406 of the Florida Statute and provide dignified burial or cremation for persons who are indigent or unclaimed. Except where prohibited by law or regulation, or where a relative has expressed a preference for burial, such service is provided through the use of cremation. The coordination of burial and cremation services is handled through the Human Services Division wherein staff maintains internal operational procedures for implementation of this administrative policy and for working with funeral homes.

Over recent years the County has received various requests from participating funeral homes to update the existing policy in order to accurately reflect the current cost incurred by the funeral homes in providing cremation services. Presently, there are four local funeral homes who work on a rotation schedule in coordination with the Human Services Division. A survey of these funeral homes revealed that a direct, or simple, cremation ranges from \$1,040 to \$2,280 with an average cost of \$1,767.25. A direct cremation is the minimal service option available that includes: removal of the decedent, transport to the crematory, the cremation, a basic urn, and no funeral service.

A second survey was conducted of indigent burial and cremation policies of surrounding counties in comparison with Indian River County. Per Administrative Policy 908.1, the County's rate of reimbursement to a funeral home for the provision of services is \$425. This rate is the lowest among counties surveyed and it is one-fourth the average cost of a direct cremation in the County.

County	Date of Policy	County Cost
Brevard	05/03/2016	\$450
Indian River	11/22/2011	\$425
Okeechobee	04/13/2006	\$575
Martin	08/21/2020	\$500
St. Lucie	11/12/2020	\$750

ANALYSIS:

Upon analysis of the surrounding Counties, staff recommends updating the indigent burial and cremation fee in the Administrative Policy Manual 908.1 from \$425 to \$750, which is an increase of \$325, or 76.5%, per burial.

Cremations	\$425 Current Rate	\$750 Proposed Rate	Budget Increase
49 (10-year avg.)	\$20,825	\$36,750	\$15,925
52 (projected FY23)	\$22,100	\$39,000	\$16,900

FUNDING:

Funding is budgeted and available in the General Fund/Human Services/Indigent Burial Costs account, number 00121164-033171, with \$11,825 remaining in the current fiscal year. Should indigent burials exceed the amount funded in FY 2022/23, a budget amendment will be necessary.

Account Name	Account Number	Remaining Budget
General Fund/Human Services/Indigent Burial Costs	00121072-033171	\$11,825

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Board of County Commissioners update the Disposal of Indigent Bodies Policy by increasing the rate of reimbursement to funeral homes for cremation services and authorize necessary budget amendments, if needed.