



**CITY COUNCIL  
COMMUNICATION:**

**ITEM \_\_\_\_\_**

**OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER  
CITY OF DES MOINES, IOWA**

**98-479**

**SYNOPSIS —**

**AGENDA:**

To approve the receipt of a grant in the amount of \$1,685 from the State of Iowa Historical Society to restore the General Nathaniel Baker Monument and family gravesite at Woodland Cemetery.

**OCTOBER 19, 1998**

**SUBJECT:**

**FISCAL IMPACT —**

**GRANT APPROVAL FOR  
GENERAL BAKER  
MONUMENT AT  
WOODLAND CEMETERY**

The State Historical Association of Iowa has granted \$1,685 to the City and there is \$560 of privately raised funds as a match. No City funds were utilized in this project.

**TYPE:**

**RECOMMENDATION —**

**RESOLUTION  
ORDINANCE  
RECEIVE/FILE**

**Approval.**

**SUBMITTED BY:**

**BACKGROUND —**

**DONALD TRIPP  
PARK AND  
RECREATION  
DIRECTOR**

The 122-year-old Baker Monument and family gravesite in Woodland Cemetery, located at the intersection of Woodland Avenue & Martin Luther King Parkway, commemorates the contribution of General Nathaniel Baker to Iowa's early history. During the Civil War he was appointed head of the Committee on Military Affairs and later made General over Iowa's 76,000 troops. Under an agreement with the children of General Baker, the State of Iowa was to maintain the monument that it paid to have built in his honor.

Over a year ago local historian Gerald LaBlanc initiated a request to the State of Iowa to uphold its commitment to care for the monument and family gravesite. After much discussion and delay, the arrangement which the

State finally approved was a grant to the City of Des Moines for all costs to clean and seal the monument, reset and clean family headstones, replace the concrete sidewalk surrounding the monument, and erect a new flagpole. In return the State asked the City to take title to the monument and grounds, and assume any future maintenance of the monument and family gravesite.

When staff received the grant application for processing, the original deadline to submit had passed. In a verbal communication with the State of Iowa, an application for emergency grant funds was authorized. The Park and Recreation Department submitted the official request and was quickly granted funding. Bids were let through the City's Purchasing Division with the provision of reimbursement upon completion of the work.

Because of the late and unusual circumstances under which the grant was obtained, staff failed to bring the grant application process and award to the attention of the City Council. At the urging of the State, the bid contract was let through the City's Purchasing Division, and work was recently completed on the monument. The State has agreed to the reimbursement of the costs, and asks the City of Des Moines to receive the transfer of title. Assuming responsibility from the State for the maintenance of the monument and gravesites is recommended for several reasons:

- 1) The City Park and Recreation Department has always mowed and trimmed grass at the monument and gravesite. There is no increased cost to the City for its care.

- 2) This is the first renovation of the monument in 112 years. Until discovered by Mr. LaBlanc, neither the City nor State was aware that responsibility lay other than with the City. While the monument may not need renovation for another 100 years, the responsibility will be clear.

- 3) Private funding has been and can be raised through several agencies for future repairs if they are needed, thus at little or no expense to the City.

- 4) Eliminating the ownership by another governmental

agency for a "public" monument aids the City in the future when other improvements or changes are desired in the Cemetery that might involve the monument or its immediate area.

Staff recommends that grant funds be accepted and the transfer of title be authorized.