Laketown Township Cemetery Rules and Regulations

Gibson Cemetery – Laketown Township, Michigan

1. Purpose

The purpose of these rules and regulations is to establish standards for the operation, maintenance, and use of Gibson Cemetery, which is owned and operated by Laketown Township. These provisions are intended to ensure that the cemetery is maintained as a respectful and orderly resting place for the deceased, to protect the rights of plot owners, and to preserve the appearance and integrity of the grounds for future generations.

2. Cemetery Location and Overview

Gibson Cemetery is located on the northeast corner of 138th Avenue and 65th Street in Laketown Township.

3. Cemetery Plot Ownership and Fees

Plot Size and Accommodations

Each cemetery plot measures 4 feet wide by 10 feet long. Plots may be used for the following arrangements:
- One (1) full burial and one (1) cremation, or
- Up to four (4) cremations total.

No more than one full burial shall be made in a single plot.

Cemetery Plot Fees

Fees for burial spaces are established by resolution of the Laketown Township Board and are subject to change. At this time, the rates are as follows:
• Residents or taxpayers: $250 per plot for the first two (2) plots per household, $500 per plot for each additional plot.
• Non-residents or non-taxpayers: $1000 per plot.

All fees must be paid in full prior to receipt of the Cemetery plot Certificate for any burial space.

Fee Authority

Pursuant to MCL 128.61 the Laketown Township Board reserves the right to establish or amend Township fees related to the sale or transfer of burial spaces by resolution at any time. Fees for grave openings and closings are set independently by the Township's contracted service provider and are subject to change at their discretion.

Plot Ownership and Transfers

Burial spaces within Gibson Cemetery are intended for the use of the individual purchaser and their family. Plots may not be sold, transferred, or assigned to any funeral director, business, or other individual for resale or commercial use. Burial rights may, however, be gifted or transferred without compensation to a family member or another individual, subject to Township approval and proper record documentation. Residents may not purchase plots on behalf of non-residents.

Forfeiture of Unused Burial Spaces

Any burial space that remains vacant for fifty (50) years from the date of sale may be declared abandoned and forfeited back to Laketown Township. Prior to forfeiture, the Township will make a reasonable effort to contact the recorded owner or heirs at their last known address. If no response is received, ownership rights to the burial space shall revert to the Township, and the plot may be resold.

4. Records and Administration

The Laketown Township Clerk shall maintain all official cemetery records, including ownership deeds, interment records, maps, and related documentation. These records will be kept as part of the permanent public record of the Township and made available for inspection in accordance with Township policy and applicable law.

5. Interments and Disinterments

Burial Vaults and Containers

Effective immediately, all burials in Gibson Cemetery must be placed within a concrete vault or other burial container approved by Laketown Township. This requirement ensures the long-term stability of the grounds and the protection of adjacent plots. Exceptions may be made only when required or permitted by Michigan law, or when the burial pertains to an existing plot with a prior allowance that has been grandfathered in.

Cremated Remains

All cremated remains (cremains) must be placed in an approved, sealed container and interred within a burial space or columbarium. The scattering of cremains anywhere within Gibson Cemetery is strictly prohibited.

Grave Openings and Closings

Grave openings and closings at Gibson Cemetery are performed only under the supervision of the Sexton and shall not be conducted by anyone other than the Sexton or a contractor authorized by the Township. Fees for openings and closings are set by the contracted service provider of the township and may vary depending on the day of the week or holiday

schedule. No less than forty-eight (48) hours' notice shall be provided to the Township for the opening or closing of any grave.

Disinterments

All disinterments within Gibson Cemetery must be conducted under the supervision of the Laketown Township Sexton or other authorized township representative. No disinterment shall occur without prior notification to and approval from the Township. A fee may be assessed to cover township staff time, coordination, or other services required during the process.

6. Burial and Headstone Guidelines

Grave Orientation

All individuals are traditionally buried with their head to the west and feet to the east, allowing the headstone to face east, in keeping with common burial customs.

Placement by Gender

In companion or double plots, it is customary-though not required-for the man to be buried on the south side and the woman on the north side. This reflects traditional cemetery layouts but is provided only as guidance. Families may choose any placement they wish, and other orientations are absolutely permitted.

Double Headstones

When a shared headstone is used, the woman's name should appear on the left (north side) and the man's name on the right (south side) when viewed from the front (facing east).

Headstone Viewing

Headstones are placed at the head of the grave (the west end) and are intended to be read while standing at the head, facing east.

7. Monuments and Markers

All markers and monuments placed within Gibson Cemetery must meet the Township's requirements for material, size, and orientation. Monuments shall be installed upon a concrete foundation and shall face east unless otherwise approved by the Township.

Single monuments and markers may not exceed 36 inches in length, 16 inches in width, and 45 inches in height. Double monuments and markers may not exceed 72 inches in length, 16 inches in width, and 45 inches in height. Any monument or marker larger than these dimensions requires prior Township approval before installation.

Foundations

The footing or foundation upon which any monument is to be placed shall be at least three and one-half inches (3.5") in depth and shall extend three inches (3") longer and three inches (3") wider than the above-ground monument. All markers are required to be placed on a foundation.

8. Maintenance, Decorations, and Appearance

Monument Maintenance

The Township shall not be responsible for the maintenance, repair, or replacement of any monument or other memorial placed upon any burial site. The Township is also not responsible for performing any special or unusual work which it determines to be beyond the scope of general cemetery maintenance, as determined at its discretion. The sexton reserves the right to correct, remove, or repair any monument or marker that is misplaced, damaged, deteriorated, or poses a safety hazard.

Ground Disturbance and Alterations

No grading, leveling, excavating, or installation of bricks, pavers, or other materials shall be permitted upon any burial space. All alterations to the cemetery grounds must be approved by Laketown Township in advance.

Plantings and Vegetation

No flowers, shrubs, trees, or other vegetation shall be planted on any burial space by the owner, family members, or visitors. All plantings and landscaping within Gibson Cemetery are the responsibility of Laketown Township or its authorized maintenance contractor. Unauthorized plantings may be removed by the Township without notice.

Tree and Plant Maintenance

Laketown Township reserves the right to trim, prune, or remove any tree, shrub, or plant within Gibson Cemetery when, in the Township's judgment, such action is necessary to maintain the proper appearance, safety, or use of the grounds.

Removal of Unsightly or Deteriorated Items

The Township, Sexton, or Cemetery Groundskeeper has the right and authority to remove and dispose of any displays, decorations, or containers that, through deterioration, damage, or neglect, have become unsightly, a source of litter, or a maintenance concern.

Removal of Unauthorized or Unlawful Items

Laketown Township reserves the right to remove any unauthorized or unlawful items placed within the cemetery, including alcohol and alcohol containers and all other items not in compliance with these rules or applicable law.

9. Visiting Hours and Liability

Visiting Hours

Gibson Cemetery is closed at dusk and opens at dawn. Visitors are not permitted on cemetery grounds outside of these hours except with prior authorization from Laketown Township.

Liability

A. Damage – With respect to Gibson Cemetery, Laketown Township shall not be held responsible for any damages caused by the elements, acts of God, common enemies, thieves, vandals, strikers, malicious mischief makers, explosions, unavoidable accidents, invasions, insurrections, riots, or orders of any military or civil authority, whether such damages are direct or collateral in nature.

B. Non-Township Employees – All non-Township employees working within the cemetery grounds shall be fully responsible for any damage caused by them or their agents. Upon completion of their work, such individuals must immediately remove all tools, equipment, and debris from the cemetery and repair any damage done to the grounds.

C. Administrative Liability – No officer, agent, or employee of Laketown Township, nor any member of the Township Board, shall be held personally liable for any damage or injury arising from acts, decisions, or occurrences that result from the proper discharge of their official duties under these rules and regulations.