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Attention: Mr S Mhlamvu
Mahlamvini Trading and Projects

METHODOLOGY FOR THE EXHUMATION AND REBURIAL OF A GRAVE

1. AGE OF THE BURIAL

It is important to first determine the age of the burial.

- If it is younger than 60 years, an undertaker must be contacted to exhume it and arrange for reburial.
- If the burial is older than 60 years, a qualified archaeologist should apply for an excavation permit from the heritage agency; in this case the Eastern Cape Provincial Heritage Resources Authority (ECPHRA).

Time frame: The application process can take up to two months, depending on the heritage agency. Costs for the permit application is for the developer, and will be included in the quotation.

2. SOCIAL CONSULTATION - ORAL HISTORY AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

Social consultation is an important aspect of the exhumation and reburial process. The closest and/or oldest relatives of the deceased should be able to provide the best information regarding any significant information regarding the deceased and the intangible heritage of the site. All information will be documented. Depending on the English competency of the interviewees, a translator will have to be provided by the developer.

Time frame: A meeting will have to be arranged by the chief or an elder of the family, during which the archaeologist will document the oral history and any information relevant to the burial. This should take no more than two days; one day for the meeting and one day for transcription of the meeting.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODS

a) Excavation

- The burial area will be demarcated (to prevent entry by other persons than the archaeologist and assistant/s).
- Initial cleaning of the area will commence. Should there be a headstone or grave marker, these will be removed. The family will decide whether they want to relocate the headstone and/or other objects from the grave.

- Excavation will commence with soil removal in 10cm layers.
- All soil removed will be sieved through two different size sieves in order to search for possible grave goods.
- Once the level of the burial has been reached, exposing the skeletal remains, excavation will continue to expose as much of the skeletal remains as possible. Photographs are taken throughout the process.
- The exposed bones are carefully removed and separately packed in aluminium foil (to protect the fragile bones from breakage and fragmentation).

Time frame:

Excavation can range from three to five days, depending on the preservation state of the skeletal remains. If it is very fragmentary and brittle, the process takes longer.

b) Laboratory Analysis

- Once the complete skeleton has been removed, the bones are transported to the laboratory where it will be cleaned prior to analysis to determine race, biological sex, age, stature and pathology. This step is necessary to confirm the claimants' declaration about the grave's incumbent.
- When this process is complete, the remains will be returned to the family for re-burial.

Time frame:

The laboratory analysis usually takes two weeks, (off site) which includes cleaning and often reconstruction of the bone material prior to analysis.

Photographic evidence is an important part of archaeological recovery, and every stage of the process is photographed in detail.

4. GRAVE RELOCATION PROCESS

- It is the family's responsibility to obtain consent from the involved familial members or traditional authority or municipality for the exhumation. They will have to stipulate their consent in a letter signed by them. This letter will be included in the final report.
- Should the grave be located on a property owned by someone else than the family, permission for entry to the farm and excavation should also be obtained. The archaeologist will be responsible for this communication. It is therefore important to obtain the name, address and contact details of the owner. This information has to be included in the permit application for excavation. Together with the owner, the archaeologist will arrange the time for work to commence.
- A formal letter of consent must be obtained from the chief (or local authority) where the reburial is intended to take place. This letter will also be included in the report sent to the ECPHRA.

- The family is responsible for obtaining a grave site from the local authority. They are also responsible to provide the coffin. The cost of the coffin, grave site and ritual practices are for the developer. If the community decides to use the services of an undertaker, the undertaker's costs are also for the developer.

Time frame: It is difficult to determine a timeframe for this, for it depends on the feedback from the community and the owner of the property.

Total time (estimated)

Permit application	60 days
Social consultation*	2 days
Archaeological excavation*	5 days (max)
Laboratory analysis	14 days
Grave relocation	?
Total Time Frame	81 days +

*Time on site

I hope you find the information you needed. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any queries. Once I have the detail of the burial (name of farm/locality, place, distance, etc), I will be able to provide a quotation.

Yours sincerely



Hester Roodt

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