

# City of Tulsa

# 1921 Race Massacre Graves

# Investigation Update

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Public Oversight Committee Meeting – June 21, 2022



# Meeting Agenda

- Welcome
- Budget Update
- DNA Update from Utah Coalition Intermountain Forensics
- Update on next steps of key recommendations in the 1921 Graves Investigation
- Questions

# Project Budget

Appropriations (FY20+FY21+FY22)	Actual Spent Funds and Committed Funds under contract (as of 06-21-2022)	Balance
800,642	609,455.16	191,187

# Budget Update

City Council approved Mayor GT Bynum's FY23 budget that includes \$1M for the Graves Investigation

City of Tulsa has applied for the Emmett Till Cold Case Grant to support the Graves Investigation

# DNA Update from Intermountain Forensics

- 28 samples received
  - 1 bone, 1 tooth/teeth for each body
- Initial results
  - VERY difficult and degraded samples
- Bone samples yielded no usable DNA
- Implementation of DNA sequencing instrument to work samples in-house
- Two samples ready for Genetic Genealogy

# DNA Update from Intermountain Forensics

- Phase 1 Process:
  - Mechanical pulverization of bone and/or teeth
    - TissueLyser II
  - DNA Extraction
    - Cells are “popped”, DNA is removed, non-DNA materials are washed away
  - DNA Quantification
    - Initial quantity of DNA in the extract is determined
    - Three data points
      - Total DNA
      - Male DNA
      - Degradation (quality) Index

# DNA Update from Intermountain Forensics

- Phase 2 Process:
  - DNA Extracts sequenced on our in-house Illumina Novaseq 6000 DNA sequencing instrument
    - Validation/Optimization of instrument going on currently
    - Allows us a MUCH quicker turn around time than outsourcing this sequencing to a external laboratory
  - Bioinformatics
    - Sequencing data is transformed into a data file for Genetic Genealogy investigation
      - 300,000-700,000 Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms
      - Upload files for GEDMatch and Family Tree DNA
  - Genetic Genealogy investigation
    - “Match” list of similar DNA is generated
    - Genetic Genealogists attempt to locate family tree information relating to the body
    - May require requests from the community for 23andMe, Ancestry.Com DNA tests to be submitted

BL#	Initial Quant Auto (teeth)	Final Quant (Auto)
1	0.012	Insufficient
3	0.051	0.686
4	0.007	Insufficient
9	0.014	Insufficient
13	0	Insufficient
14	0	Insufficient
15	0.015	Insufficient
16	0.006	Insufficient
17	0.05	0.555
19	0	Insufficient
27	0.002	Insufficient
28	0.005	Insufficient
29	0.011	Insufficient
30	0	Insufficient

**Phase 1:**  
**Teeth - Preliminary**



# DNA Update from Intermountain Forensics

## Phase 1: Bone - Preliminary

- No bone sample produced a usable DNA result

# DNA Update from Intermountain Forensics

## NEXT STEPS

- Work with technical experts to evaluate and identify further samples from the 12 remaining bodies that did not have enough DNA to move forward effectively
- Genetic Genealogy DNA Sequencing profile run scheduled
  - Sample R2/OU14/BL3
  - Sample R9/OU10/BL17
  - Expected Mid July/Early August
    - Validating/Optimizing our instrument for these difficult samples

# DNA Update from Intermountain Forensics

## Ways Community Members can help:

- Whether you have family stories, have taken a DNA test, would like to take one or have a family tree (digital or written), Intermountain Forensics would love to hear from you. Fill out the form online or visit any one of the Tulsa City-County Library locations.

<https://www.intermountainforensics.com/tulsadnaproject>

Or email at: [info@tulsa1921dna.org](mailto:info@tulsa1921dna.org)

# Proposed Next Phases of Fieldwork

- Geoarchaeological investigations at Newblock Park and the Canes
- Expanded excavations in Section 20, Oaklawn Cemetery





## Possible Mass Graves Reported at Newblock Park & The Canes

# Proposed Work at Newblock Park & The Canes

Compile background information

Conduct geoarchaeological  
coring/augering

Assess and Interpret landscape history  
at each location

Capture results in technical report

Make recommendations for next steps



# Expand Excavations in Section 20, Oaklawn Cemetery

# Proposed Next Fieldwork at Oaklawn: Main Steps

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Expand excavations from the 2021 excavation block

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Map and remove headstones in the area for safe storage in off-site location

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Monitor/Document mechanical removal of overlying soil

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Targeted excavation and exhumation strategy focused on male individuals interred in simple wood caskets with evidence of trauma

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On-site forensic analyses

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Coordinate DNA analysis and reburial in original location

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Plan and set aside funding for return of headstones and placement of new markers for those who did not have one



# Update on Next Steps in the Investigation

Systematic enlargement of excavation area in Section 20 focusing on exhuming simple coffin, black male burials

- Finalize Scope of Work
- Hire an archeological contracting firm

Conduct geoarchaeological survey of Newblock Park/Canes areas

- Finalize Scope of Work
- Hire an archeological contracting firm

# Project Timeline

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•City of Tulsa reopens investigation</li><li>•Build upon historical research from 2001 Race Riot Commission Report</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Geophysical survey work begins at four areas of interest:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Oaklawn Cemetery</li><li>•Newblock Park</li><li>•Rolling Oaks</li><li>•The Canes</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Recommendation to conduct test excavations at Oaklawn Cemetery</li><li>•As a result of testing, no indication mass grave or human remains in Sexton Area and Clyde Eddy Area</li><li>•Unmarked graves detected in Original 18 Area</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Conducted block excavations in Original 18 area</li><li>•Remains exhumed received forensic analysis</li><li>•Collected DNA samples</li><li>•Reinterred exhumed remains</li><li>•Selected DNA partner</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Recommendation to conduct further excavation at Oaklawn Cemetery &amp; geoarchaeological survey work at Newblock Park &amp; The “Canes” site</li><li>•Completed Phase 1 of DNA Analysis</li><li>•Budget \$1M in FY23 Budget</li></ul>



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