

Minutes of 6/28/2023 Cemetery Commission

6:00 PM

**Hybrid Meeting with Zoom
(Under Emergency Order for Pandemic)**

Approved at the Meeting of 7.26.23

Members present: Walter Tibbetts (WT), Dina Stander (DS), Susan Millinger (SM). The Meeting was called to order at 6:06 p.m.

- 1) Minutes of the May 17, 2023 meeting as amended: *motion to approve these minutes as amended was seconded and the motion was unanimously approved by a roll call vote.*
- 2) New burials and lot sales: WT has met with several people about purchasing lots. Two people are interested in lots at the Locks Pond Cemetery: one hasn't fully committed; another is willing to wait to look at lots. The person planning to buy a plot in the green/natural area has picked one out, but needs time to think about her choice.
- 3) Acquisition of external hard drive: WT has purchased a five terabyte on which to save all relevant documents. It is stored in our drawer in the Town Hall committee room. He has loaded on it everything he could find from 2014 to the present. (Some documents are missing.)
- 4) Update on expenses: The time sheets for December show \$4,438 allotted for wages of which \$663.68 was used, leaving \$3,774.22
\$1,631 was allotted for other expenses; \$1,468 has been used, leaving \$584.32.
WT recently purchased aviation fuel for the gas-powered equipment.
WT will look up and send to the others the amount in the expendable trust.
- 5) Other Unfinished business:

a) Board of Health (BOH) decision about green burials in the Jewish Community Amherst's Cemetery. The Cemetery Commission learned about the decision from an article in the June 15-21 issue of *The Reminder* which DS happened to read. The Cemetery Commission's concern is what in that decision -- specifically the allowed density of burials per acre-- applies to West Cemetery's green/natural section. Does this ruling apply to Town cemeteries, and if so, to what burials? According to *The Reminder* article, the BOH's decision applies to burials interred after Feb 15, 2023.

If it is the case that the decision made by the BOH impacts all cemeteries in Shutesbury, the Cemetery Commission is concerned that it was not invited to be present for the discussion. The Commission decided to formally ask the BOH what if anything in its decision applies to the cemeteries for which the Commission is responsible. WT will put together our questions and send them to the BOH, pointing out that if decisions were being made affecting all cemeteries in Town, the Cemetery Commission should have been present.

b) Community Preservation Committee (CPC) contract. This is a new requirement. It primarily asks us to acknowledge that if our project is not finished within the time period set, the Commission would lose the money it had received from the CPC. *A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved by a roll call vote to request WT to sign the contract with the CPC and the Town of Shutesbury concerning work on the current historic gravestone restoration project.*

c) CPC applicant exit survey. SM was asked to fill out the survey, since she did much of the writing of the grant application.

6) Letter of resignation of two groundskeepers: Commission members were sorry to learn of the departure of two excellent

groundskeepers, Suzan Young and Mike Browsky. They have agreed to stay on to the end of the season to “onboard” their replacements.

7) *Need to hire new Groundskeepers*: The first step is to ask Linus Mearian, the third Groundskeeper, if he is willing to replace Suzan and Mike. WT is not sure whether he will want to increase his time beyond the time he spends on the two smaller Town cemeteries, but WT will find out. A job description already exists; WT will work with the Town Administrator on the next steps if Linus is not interested.

8) *Improper installation of headstone by a private person*: The Commission needs a new regulation preventing what has happened in the past: a private individual placing a headstone on the wrong plot or in the wrong place in a plot. *A motion was made, seconded and unanimously passed by a roll call vote that the following regulation should be added to the Cemetery regulations: “No private individual shall install a gravestone or marker until a member of the Cemetery Commission has marked the proper location for the stone. Anyone not following this regulation will be charged a fine of \$100.”*

9) *Discussion about burial of pets in the cemetery*: Several weeks ago, the Commission was asked for permission to bury a pet in cemetery lot. Consideration was postponed until the regular Commission meeting. DS pointed out that a lot of cemeteries do not permit the burial of pets. She also commented that based on her experience, she knows that a lot of local residents would see the burial of a pet in it a disturbance of the sanctity of the cemetery. No motion was made, but the sense of the discussion appeared to be opposed to permitting the burial of pets.

10) *Items not anticipated 48 hours before the meeting*:

- a. Discovering where there are otherwise unknown burials: a future project. The Commission is particularly concerned about lots which are described in cemetery records as having “unknown” contents.
- 1) It would be useful to begin a three-ring binder with a section for each lot. The names of each person known to be buried in that lot would be listed, with the position of each grave.
 - 2) Once known burials have been recorded, the Commission would be in a better position to have ground penetrating radar confirm which other plots contain unrecorded burials.
 - 3) Finding the cost of employing ground-penetrating radar. DS can get information on a company doing this work, and an estimate of cost.
 - 4) This would be a future project, after the current historic gravestone restoration project.
- b. Contact from another Cemetery Commission. The Shutesbury Commission received an email from Syd Reiman of the Pelham Cemetery Commissioners asking about the costs of mowing and taking general care of cemetery grounds.

10. Date for the Next Meeting: July 26 at 6 p.m.

11. Adjournment: *A motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and unanimously approved in a roll call vote.* The meeting was adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

Submitted by
Susan Millinger,
Cemetery Commission secretary