

## Minutes of 8/16/2023 Cemetery Commission

6:00 PM

Hybrid Meeting with Zoom

(Under Emergency Order for Pandemic)

Minutes Approved at the Meeting of 9.20.23

Members present: Walter Tibbetts (WT), Dina Stander (DS), Susan Millinger (SM). The Meeting was called to order at 6:04.

- 1) Minutes of the July 26, 2023 meeting. Motion to approve these minutes as amended was made, seconded and the motion was unanimously passed by a roll call vote.
- 2) New burials and lot sales
  - a. New request for a lot in the green/natural section.
  - b. Possible new request for a family lot in West Cemetery.
  - c. Marking out for a headstone in West, initially in a nearby lot. Headstone from Mann Memorial of Athol, which has taken over from Dorsey; it seems to be doing a good job.
- 3) Need to hire new Groundskeepers:
  - a. WT has talked with Town Administrator Torres about this hiring.
  - b. He has not yet been able to talk to Linus Mearian to see if he is interested.
  - c. Torres told WT it's time to post the opening: he should talk with Personnel Committee about bringing the job description up-to-date. WT will tinker with the existing job description and listing and run it by DS and SM.
- 4) Need for New equipment:
  1. The backpack blower is old, and may need major repairs or to be replaced.
  2. Should we turn groundskeeping—and therefore provision of equipment--over to professionals? DS asked whether the Commission should consider this. It was agreed to look into the cost of having the groundskeeping done by a firm like Grassroots or Shumway (if they are still doing this.)
- 5) The new Board of Health regulations: The BOH replied to WT's polite request for a friendly clarification of the BOH's new regulations about green burials. The Commission was told that the new regulations about

natural/green burials do not apply to the Town Cemeteries and the work of the Cemetery Commission.

6) *The Community Preservation Committee's new contract:* WT left the signed contract in the Select Board mailbox and told the Town Administrator it was there. He will give Ta'Mara Conde a heads up about where we are in the process.

7) *Update on ground-penetrating radar:* DS has not heard back yet from the companies she contacted.

8) *Other unfinished business:*

- a. DS will draft regulations about interment of cremations.
- b. DS will draft information about family-directed burials.
- c. We agreed that a to-do list would be helpful for family/friend-directed burials and also for those planning to use a funeral director. No one took on these tasks, unless DS's planned draft for family-directed burials would meet the first need.
- d. SM found a better copy of the General Regulations for Burials with the statement about vaults being optional in traditional burials and not permitted in natural/green burials. She is attaching that version. It includes:
  1. the recent addition about checking with the Cemetery Commission chair before erecting a gravestone or marker (in the new Section 4)
  2. a draft note encouraging people to come to a CemCom meeting to ask their questions (in Section 2 of the Regulations)
  3. a rearrangement of the order of the sections, so that gravestone and decoration business is the final section
  4. an added phrase that the regulations for a cement or stone base for a gravestone applies to traditional burials (in the new Section 4)
  5. Please take a look and see what you think. Changes 1, 2 and 4 are highlighted in aqua. The revisions need to be approved.

7. *Date and time for the Next Meeting:* Sept 20 at 6 p.m.

8. *Adjournment:* *A motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and unanimously approved in a roll call vote.* The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Submitted by  
Susan Millinger,  
Cemetery Commission secretary

Attachment:

## Regulations for Shutesbury Cemeteries

### Section One: General Regulations: Conduct of Persons within Cemeteries

Cemetery access is permitted between one hour before sunrise and one hour after sunset.

Please be respectful of the resting places of family, friends and neighbors.

Alcoholic beverages, camping, and fires are prohibited.

You are welcome to walk your dogs here, but be sure to clean up after them.

Do not pick flowers, either wild or cultivated; do not break or cut trees, shrubbery or plants.

Do not deface or otherwise damage gravestones, monuments, markers, gravesites, or other structures.

Gravestone rubbings are prohibited unless permitted in writing by the Lot owner or by the Cemetery Commission if no Lot owner can be found.

Neither the Shutesbury Cemetery Commission nor the Town of Shutesbury is to be held liable for theft, vandalism and/or destruction of property on any Town Cemetery.

### Section Two: Purchase of Cemetery Lots

Note: The Cemetery Commission asks those who have questions and concerns about burials, gravestones, etc., to come to our regular monthly public meetings so we can answer their questions in as a timely a way as we can, and ask our own questions to get clarity about their needs and desires. Consult the Town Meetings Calendar for information about the next scheduled meeting and link. Please contact the Chair to be put on the agenda.

#### Part A: Purchase

For further information regarding purchasing lots, burials, and their requirements, (including the Natural Burial Section), please visit the Cemetery Commission section of the Town website [www.shutesbury.org](http://www.shutesbury.org)

The purchase of cemetery lots is limited to those individuals with personal connections to Shutesbury. New sales to Non-Residents are available only to people who have previously resided in town, or have family members resident in town, or are descended from people who were residents, or at the discretion of the Cemetery Commission.

Persons who wish to purchase lots must contact the Chair of the Cemetery Commission or another member of the Commission if the Chair is not available.

#### Part B: Transfer and Repurchase of Lots

The Town of Shutesbury reserves the sole and exclusive authority over the use and/or exchange of lots. Any change in ownership or transfer of rights may be made only through the Shutesbury Cemetery Commission.

The Shutesbury Cemetery Commission may, at its discretion, allow the transfer of ownership of cemetery lots from one person to another.

The Shutesbury Cemetery Commission may, at its discretion, agree to repurchase a lot or lots from the lot owner, their heirs, or the lot owner's estate. The amount paid for the repurchase of a lot will be the original amount paid for the lot, but not less than \$100.00/lot.

#### Section Three: Burials

Burial arrangements are normally made with a funeral director who communicates with the Chair of the Cemetery Commission. However, it is possible for funerals to be directed by family members or the executor(s) of the deceased, as long as all regulations are followed. Consult the website for the Cemetery Commission's Guidelines for a Family-Directed Funeral.

Whoever is directing a funeral is required to inform the Chair of the Cemetery Commission of burial date, time, cemetery in which burial is to take place, a lot#, and name of owner of lot prior to any commitment to the deceased's family.

The burial of cremated remains must be arranged with the Chair of the Cemetery Commission.

Burials are not required to be in a vault in any part of any of Shutesbury's Cemeteries, but they are not prohibited in any section except the natural (green) burial area of West Cemetery.

#### Section Four: Grave Decorations and Graves:

The owner of a plot shall have the right to erect a gravestone, marker or monument commemorative of the dead. However, 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.

(Definitions: A gravestone is upright; a monument is a more elaborate structure like an obelisk or a statue; a marker is set in the ground. The top of a marker must be even with the soil line and its dimensions not more than 2 feet by 1 foot.)

All gravestones and monuments for traditional burials must rest on a foundation of cement and stone, and shall reach a depth below the customary frost line and be built to professional standards. A natural stone used as a gravestone need not rest on a foundation as long as the stone is not subject to falling over.

Statues, fences, curbing, effigies, or other structures that may interfere with maintenance are prohibited. Small items left in remembrance are not prohibited as long as they are placed on the stone so that they don't interfere with maintenance.

Placing of flags must be approved by the Chair or in his absence another member of the Shutesbury Cemetery Commission.

Planting of any trees, shrubs or ornamentals without permission from the Cemetery Commission is prohibited. Annual or perennial flowers may be planted in front of the gravestone or monument. The Commission has the authority to trim or remove any plantings as deemed necessary.

Cemetery staff have the right to remove all flowers, containers & decorations on any burial site when they deem necessary.

Approved by the Shutesbury Cemetery Commission 12/15/21; revision approved 9/20/23