

**Minutes of 1/23/2024 Cemetery Commission
10:30 A.M.
Special Meeting with Bob Perry of Topographix LLC
Minutes Approved at the Meeting of February 28, 2024**

Members present: Walter Tibbetts (WT), Dina Stander (DS), Susan Millinger (SM) and guest Bob Perry. The Meeting was called to order at 10:40 a.m.

The first portion of the meeting was a presentation by Perry on what services his firm, Topographix LLC (which specializes in ground-penetrating radar of cemeteries), could provide in connection with determining whether or not the graves marked "Unknown" on maps of West Cemetery contain burials, and the cost of those services. Topographix also maps cemeteries. Bob suggests redrafting and computerizing the maps we have, so that we have an accurate map of West Cemetery, which we currently lack. Then he would use ground-penetrating radar of the sites marked "Unknown."

His prices: \$200 for travel (given the closeness of Shutesbury to his New Hampshire base); an estimated 20 hours of drafting the map at \$95/hour; \$1,650 for a site survey, \$1,850/day to examine the graves in question with ground-penetrating radar. His estimate: \$8,000 for what we'd like done.

After Mr. Perry left, the Cemetery Commissioners agreed that time was of the essence, given his closeness to retirement, and that the services he could provide would be well worth their cost.

WT will take the existing maps, with the "unknown" lots marked, to be copied and sent to Mr. Perry.

The business of the regular January meeting followed.

1) Minutes of the January 18, 2023 meeting: Motion to approve these minutes was made, seconded and the motion was unanimously passed by a roll call vote.

2) New burials and lot sales:

a. No new burials

b. One lot in West Cemetery, a two-plot lot, has been sold since November.

3) Update on a meeting of WT with a lot owner in the Pratt Corner Road Cemetery about clarification of lots and question about the process of putting a headstone on a lot.

a. Note: Major vandalizing in the past has caused stones in the Pratt Road Cemetery to be broken or stolen; Bob Perry's Topographix would be helpful in this situation.

4) Review and approval of Annual Report for FY23: The Annual Report needs additional information about expenses. That will be provided by WT. A motion was

made to approve the Annual Report for FY23 with the assurance that the needed information will be included. The motion was seconded and unanimously passed.

5) Update on the Hiring of new Groundskeepers:

- a. The subject is on the agenda for the February 1 Personnel Committee meeting.
- b. The Town Administrator has asked for the updated job description.
- c. WT will attend the Personnel Committee about the possibility of raising the wages of the position. If the Committee approves, the matter will go to the Select Board for its approval.
- d. WT mentioned to the Town Administrator that the Cemetery Commission wanted a warrant article for the April Town Meeting allowing a Member of the Commission to be employed as a paid groundskeeper.

6) Items not anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting:

- a. The Jewish Community of Amherst (JCA) sent a representative to the Planning Board about the issue of setbacks. The Planning Board chair spoke to DS. The question was whether JCA had applied for a permit from the Town; it was discovered that it had. DS communicated with the new executive administrator of the JCA to let her know that DS was the member of the Cemetery Commission she should use as a liaison with the Commission. DS found out that the JCA is looking for land for a second cemetery and asked as a friendly neighbor that we be kept informed.
- b. Brief discussion of the recent Funeral Consumer Alliance program on the present variety of possible methods of care for the bodies of the dead. DS volunteered to draft a letter for the Commission to send in support of State legislation allowing more options in addition to inhumation and cremation.

7) Date and time for the Next Meeting: February 21 at 6 p.m., with a backup date of February 28.

8) Adjournment: A motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and unanimously approved in a roll call vote. The meeting was adjourned at 1 p.m.

Submitted by
Susan Millinger,
Cemetery Commission secretary