

MINUTES

Participants: Commissioners Viki Zulkoski and Linda Hamilton and former Commissioner Stephen Brooks. Commissioner Cheryl Walker out of town.

Minutes of the April 7, 2016 meeting were approved and will be posted on the Cemetery Commission page of the Town website.

Fiscal issue:

Regarding the \$1,850 unanticipated legal fee which now pushes Cemetery Commission FY16 budget into deficit, Linda reported on her inquiry to Selectboard Chair Lane Morrison about the possibility of shifting the legal fee to the Selectboard's budget at this time.

Lane is willing to bring such a request to the Selectboard, but reluctant since it would mean a time-consuming revisiting of the Selectboard discussion and specific decision that it was appropriate to show the expense under Cemetery Commission. He confirmed that the Selectboard is prepared to cover this expense at the end of this fiscal year, when the overall Town budget is reconciled.

Lane also affirmed that there is no negative repercussion for Cemetery Commission to leave this expense where it is, either legally, since under State statute Cemetery Commission can authorize deficit spending when it deems necessary, or in terms of damaging good-faith working relationships with the Auditors or Selectboard. All parties acknowledge that this was an unanticipated expense triggered by a request from the Auditors for legal clarification of how to apply State requirements for cemetery plot mapping and deeds,

Linda recommends that since there is no implication of poor budget management and therefore no stigma attached to showing a deficit in this case, that we take no further action. The Commission will make a decision on this matter at the next meeting (tentatively May 5).

Anticipated Field Work:

Stephen outlined routine and other anticipated field work needed this season (basically warm weather May-November). Some indoor tasks such as fine work on tombstones, can sometimes be done over the winter. And some larger outdoor tasks beyond the anticipated ~ \$1,200 in tree trimming, can be deferred until later in the warm season, and scheduled pending sufficient funds. Routine mowing, leaf- and twig-clearing, *etc.* cannot be deferred and must be kept up throughout the season. Repair of tombstones generally and any related to vandalism is a priority.

Stephen will work closely with Dale Knowles and Mow!Mow!Mow! to orient them to the special needs of cemeteries as they carry out the routine maintenance under the specs of the Town contract.

Approximately the same amount of independent contractors, both skilled and semi-skilled, will be needed this season as in the recent past. Access to a truck, driver and basic tools and supplies likewise.

Stephen is heartened by the rising level of support from the community, in terms of donation of funds and services. He will continue his much-appreciated fundraising efforts, and solicitation of in-kind services which have been so valuable in the past. The Commission will keep track of the nature and value of these community contributions, so they continue to be acknowledged and donors thanked.

The particular needs and management approaches for Barber and Bradley Cemeteries are distinct. For example, in East Burying Ground (on Spear Street) where moss is being promoted as the desirable ground cover over the rocky terrain, it is important to keep twig and leaf litter picked up and woody forest understory suppressed. In West Burying Ground (on Greenbush Road), ground cover is not an issue, but rather ground subsidence and the need for fill in places. These and other issues will be explored with Stephen on the cemetery tour planned for May 15.

Signs for these two cemeteries have been prepared under Stephen's direction, and will be installed in July if not earlier.

Important related topics deferred for later discussion include assessment of fencing needs and options, beautification with attractive perennials, possible benches, improved access (parking, entrances *etc.*), and special issues of the several private cemeteries under the Commission's purview.

Stephen confirmed that he is willing and able to continue overseeing and carrying out field work on the grounds and tombstones, as well as fundraising for the cemeteries. This very significant commitment of time, energy and talent is key to our ability to fulfill our stewardship responsibility. In recognition of the importance of this work, and the need for reliability over time, the Commission will consider creating a job description and remuneration for some of these tasks, --to compliment a reasonable amount of voluntary commitment. A decision will be made by the end of June.

Other Business:

Viki will participate in the May 7 meeting of the Vermont Old Cemetery Association, with expenses of mileage and registration including lunch reimbursable.

Tentative meeting dates in May are now May 5 (Linda absent) and May 21 (Viki absent). Viki, Linda and Cheryl will review personal schedules in May via email, and confirm optimal Commission meeting dates and also request time on the Auditors' agenda in May to review hiring guidelines.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda S. Hamilton, Secretary