

**Charlotte Cemetery Commission Meeting**  
**August 4, 2016 10:00am - 12:15pm**  
**Town Hall**

**APPROVED 9-1-16**

## **MINUTES**

Participants: Cemetery Commissioners Viki Zulkoski and Linda Hamilton; Cemetery Support Team member Susan Ohanian

**Minutes of July 14, 2016 meeting** were approved and will be placed on Cemetery Commission page of Town website. We strive to place draft minutes on the website within 5 days after the meeting, to be replaced with approved minutes when these are available. We are not able to manage our page directly, and appreciate the assistance of Town Administrator Dean Bloch to add/delete the materials we provide him.

### **Commission membership changes**

With regret, we have accepted the resignation of Cheryl Walker as a Commissioner. In her short tenure (March-July 2016), she provided an invaluable service by reviewing, clarifying and grouping all invoices from FY16 in preparation for the Commission's annual audit by Town Auditors. We will miss her clear thinking and enthusiasm, but understand that changed work demands require more of her attention. Thank you, Cheryl! Linda will now be the principal contact with Town Clerk Mary Mead on financial matters.

With appreciation, we accepted the willingness of Susan Ohanian to serve as a Commissioner, and appointed her effective this date. She has long-standing interest and experience with cemeteries and shares our commitment to stewardship and community involvement. Welcome, Susan!

### **Update on Cemetery Operations Assistant**

The proposed Operations Assistant position will not be pursued at this time, due to the withdrawal of Stephen Brooks. On July 29 Stephen advised us that for personal reasons he would no longer be available to assist the Cemetery Commission.

We accept Stephen's unexpected withdrawal, and express our sincere appreciation for the support and encouragement he has steadfastly provided since our appointment in March 2016. He has generously shared information and insight gained from his several years as a Cemetery Commissioner himself. And he provided the practical help we needed to organize and oversee routine grounds maintenance work this season. We will especially miss his sincere and infectious love of historic cemeteries, and thank him deeply ourselves and on behalf of the Town, for the attentive care and repair he has given our burying grounds. Thank you, Stephen.

### **Grounds maintenance casual labor**

Under Stephen's supervision, Stiles Alpeter and Jennings Lobel have been working as temporary grounds maintenance laborers this summer, supplementing work provided under Town mowing contract with Mow! Mow! Mow!. Neither has worked more than 15 hours so far, and both will become unavailable later in August to return to school. Because of on-going confusion over how to interpret and apply some aspects of the Town's 2014 Goods and Services Purchasing Policy, Town Clerk Mary Mead and Commissioners were no longer confident that Stiles and Jennings were correctly classified as casual labor. Mary requested and received a reading of their situation this week from Pam Fecteau of Vermont League of Cities and Towns. Pam advises that they should be Town employees. Mary provided a new set of forms which they will need to complete, and Linda will see that Stiles and Jennings understand what they need to submit and why, in order to be paid. Apparently most, if not all, future temporary (casual) labor will need to be hired as Town employees.

In order to continue basic maintenance in not only West and East Burying Grounds but also Quinlan/Sherman (off Spear Street) and Marcotte (off Carpenter Road),

Viki will discuss with Vanessa and Dale Knowles of Mow! Mow! Mow! the possibility of them doing careful weed whacking around stones in West Burying Grounds using the softest string possible, sturdy guards, and angled approaches as appropriate in order to protect the stones (in other words, reinstating trimming as part of their regular mowing, but with increased cautions to the work crew). In addition Viki will inquire if they are prepared to keep grass in the two very small burying grounds cut with weed whackers (with the same cautions around stones), noting that access to the sites is a 5-10 minute walk-in across private property and vehicle parking space near the Town road is limited. Based on the willingness and availability of Mow! Mow! Mow! for this work, we will determine the best use of Stiles' and Jennings' limited additional time (beyond completing the spreading of topsoil into low areas in West Burying Ground).

If necessary to provide Stiles and Jennings access to the Commission's equipment which is now stored in Stephen's garage, Linda will shift at least the weed whacker to her garage until a more permanent home can be established on Town property.

### **July 27 meeting with Auditors**

Viki and Linda attended a meeting of Auditors Jenny Cole, Jason Pidgeon and Peter Trono at Jenny's suggestion since there were items on their agenda related to Cemetery Commission.

We agreed to early September as a convenient time for the fiscal audit of FY16. Prior to meeting, we will provide a brief narrative describing activities during that time, and fiscal reports which categorize and group invoices available from Town Clerk.

We also shared a copy of the check list and forms received from Pam Fecteau of Vermont League of Cities and Towns related to determining if a person qualifies or not as a contractor, since Auditors are still informing themselves on how to apply the Town policy.

The Auditors (primarily Peter) used most of the meeting for a lengthy free-ranging commentary on past and present Cemetery Commission activities.

### **Meetings with Stuart Morrow, Cemetery Commissioner and Superintendent, Town of Shelburne**

Viki and Linda met with Stuart over breakfast August 2 and again at West Burying Ground (Barber Cemetery) August 3 for a targeted discussion of common interests and concerns, and to learn from his considerable experience. A summary of our discussions is attached. Even though our situations and challenges are somewhat different, we gained much from Stuart's comments and observations.

### **Meeting with Charlotte Tree Warden Larry Hamilton**

At our request, Larry joined us August 3 during a site visit to West Burying Ground, so that he could assess and advise us on tree issues in that cemetery.

Recent trimming of cedar and maple limbs was noted, and Larry confirmed that obvious potential hazards had been taken care of. The large maple and cedar need to be monitored for developing hazards.

Relatively recent (within the last two years) mower/weed whacker damage was noted on several trees, including those planted under the shade tree restoration program of the Charlotte Tree Fund.

Since the large cedar in the center of the cemetery has multiple leaning stems and has suffered damage in the past from a lightning strike, Larry will ask experienced arborist Greg Smith to assess its stability and see if he advises some means of reinforcement at this time.

### **Possible cemetery educational display in Charlotte Library**

September is Archaeology Month and Charlotte Library is considering a display with that theme. Jenny Cole will be organizing it and inquired if Cemetery Commission would support and help with a cemetery-themed display. After a brief discussion, we decided that even though there is deep Commission interest in such public education and outreach projects, the timing of a cemetery-themed display in the library or elsewhere is not good. We prefer to wait until the current cemeteries have a more well-tended appearance, and we are ready to begin community discussion of a new cemetery. Viki will convey this to Jenny.

### **Mapping of gravesites in West Burying Ground (Barber Cemetery)**

Existing maps and records leave us without complete confidence about where there may or may not be space available for additional burials. We believe professional mapping with ground-penetrating radar will provide enough information to either justify closing this cemetery or considering the sale of additional plots in certain areas.

Based on discussions Viki has had with two of the few professional businesses who do this work (one in Vermont and one based in Boston), she will draft a project description to be used for a call for bids. We will finalize this at the next Cemetery Commission meeting.

It may be desirable in the future to purchase computer software to organize and archive detailed information about cemeteries and plots, but it is not a priority at this time.

### **Next meeting**

Thursday September 1, 2016, 10:00-12:00 at Town Hall. We will strive to hold our regular monthly meetings the first Thursday of the month at this time.

Respectfully submitted,  
Linda S. Hamilton, Secretary

### **Charlotte Cemetery Commissioners Viki Zulkoski and Linda Hamilton informal meeting with Shelburne Cemetery Commissioner and Superintendent Stuart Morrow**

**August 2, 2016          Dutch Mill Restaurant**

Questions for Stuart

- *How do you mow around antique stones?*

Very, very carefully. We have our own equipment – you just need to find the right people for the job. People who will take their time and go slowly.

- *Is a weed whacker used?*

Yes, but very carefully. Not sure what gage string is used.

- *Where do you store your equipment?*

On site at the Village Cemetery, which is 11 acres. The Shelburne Cemetery Commission owns the mowers, weed whackers, etc.

- *Do all the laborers used have Workman's Comp?*

Not sure... doesn't think it applies since they work under 32 hours.

- *Who handles your stone repair?*

They handle it themselves. They have used an individual named Woody who is 'reasonable.' At times dowels were inserted to support the stones internally during repairs.

- *How many paid employees? Is there a Superintendent?*

Yes, the grounds keepers are paid employees of the town. Stuart acts as the Superintendent and the Commissioner, he is not compensated for either job.

- *How many cemeteries do you supervise?*

3 in total, Village cemetery, the small one on Spear Street north of Barstow and a small one on the Webb estate.

- *Approximately how many plots are left in Shelburne?*

About 30 years worth, based on 10 burials per year (caskets). The past 3 years has shown a steady increase in burials.

- *What is the price range for plots?*

\$600/plot which is 7' X 10' and big enough for 2 caskets. Cremation plots are \$525.

- *Do you use herbicides? Which ones?*

No, they don't have the budget for that.

- *What is your budget?*

\$40,000 per year for all three cemeteries. Paid out according to the fiscal year. *The Tractor Fund* is a special fund created to rollover funds (\$4,000 per year) so that a new mower, etc... could be purchased anytime. Shelburne works off a trust, and the cemetery funds come from the interest generated from that trust. An amount of \$5,000 from the annual budget is set aside for 'Capital Improvements.'

- *What would you do if you found a woodchuck or fox den in a cemetery?*

Hire someone to kill it or trap it.

- *Have you had any incidents of vandalism?*

Yes, two incidents. One about 20 years ago was 'pretty bad'.

- *Have you ever mapped and/or had GPR work done in your old cemetery? Any advice?*

Yes, they use AutoCad software, ProTem? They have someone, a girl from Hinesburg who currently works with Find-A-Grave who might join their board (board members apparently do not need to be residents). Stuart suggested we try speaking to the UVM Archeology department

first, then pursue it. He mentioned the company who spoke at the annual VOCA meeting a few years ago.

- *How is the Shelburne Cemetery Commission structured?*

It is a 5 member committee, Stuart Morrow is the chairman and also the Superintendent. These are unpaid positions. SM oversees the paid employees who handle the grounds maintenance. SM estimates he spends 4 – 5 hours a week on cemetery business.

- *As superintendent, what are your chief responsibilities?*

To hire people to mow and maintain the grounds, to supervise the work done. To lock the cemetery if necessary (during heavy snow) and to sell and file all paperwork for burials. Stuart files all the information with the town.

- *Who is responsible for the flags that are put on Veterans' graves for Memorial Day?*

Stuart does this. He buys the flags (Approximately \$2 a piece) at SB Signs, Shunpike Turnpike in Williston

- *As an organization, do you conduct any fundraising?*

No, we have funds available from the trust and he doubts that an affluent town like Shelburne could make the case for fund raising.

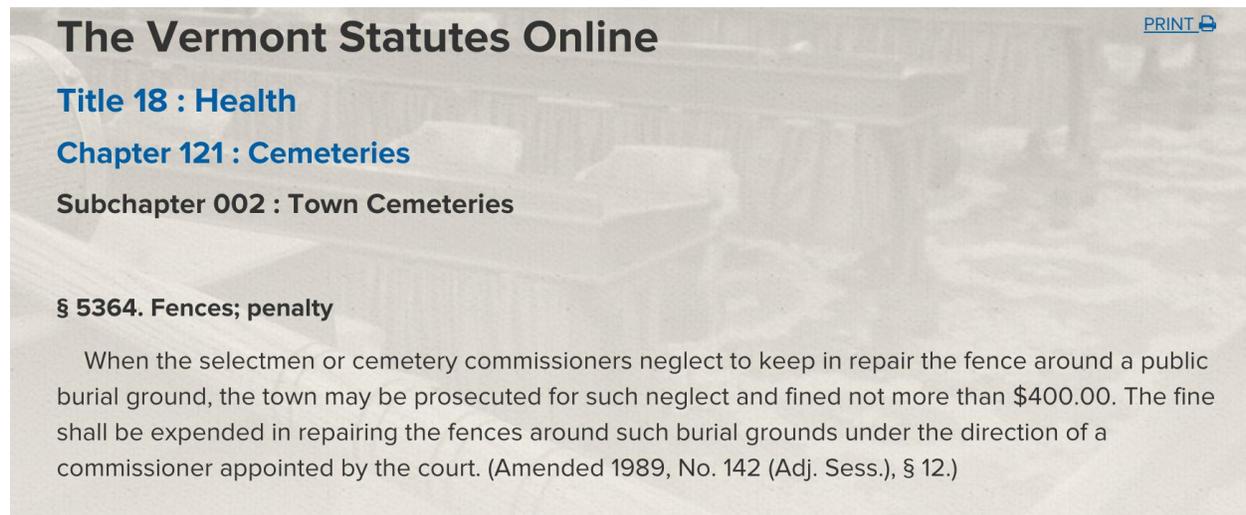
- *Are you starting to get inquiries for green burials?*

Yes, inquiries are starting to come in. Vermont law does not require embalming chemicals, so green burials are possible.

- *Is there a law that requires cemeteries to have fences?*

As far as Stuart understands, a fence is not required (Village Cemetery has stately old cedar trees), but if there is a fence, it must be properly maintained. There may be a new statute on the books as of this year or 2015.

From: <http://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/18/121/05364>



**The Vermont Statutes Online** PRINT 

**Title 18 : Health**

**Chapter 121 : Cemeteries**

**Subchapter 002 : Town Cemeteries**

**§ 5364. Fences; penalty**

When the selectmen or cemetery commissioners neglect to keep in repair the fence around a public burial ground, the town may be prosecuted for such neglect and fined not more than \$400.00. The fine shall be expended in repairing the fences around such burial grounds under the direction of a commissioner appointed by the court. (Amended 1989, No. 142 (Adj. Sess.), § 12.)

Addendum:

The Charlotte Cemetery Commission met with Stuart Morrow on August 3<sup>rd</sup> for a site inspection of the West Burying Ground on Greenbush Road. His general impressions:

- Due to the irregular topography and the placement of the stones, a push-type mower would be better than a zero turn mower for the tighter spaces
- The guard on a weed whacker should prevent the scratches in evidence on some stones
- Using the map and a tape measure, the placement of some family plots might be determined
- The hole under the peony bush, an animal den of some type is probably a woodchuck
- Ideally driveway would be added, either at the north or south end to allow cars to park off the road and turn around to prevent backing out onto Greenbush

Larry Hamilton, Tree Warden was also there to give general impressions of the health of the cemetery's trees and warn of any potential hazards

- After inspecting the rodent guards, it appeared that a few trees have light damage caused by mowers or weed whackers as well
- The large cedar in the center of the cemetery looks to be healthy and though its structure is divided into two main trunks, there appears to be no immediate concern. Larry placed a peg to gauge and continued separation of the trunks and will follow up with a professional arborist. Evidence of recent limbing could be seen.
- The large maple on the eastern border (trunk circumference 13' 11') poses no immediate threat to surrounding memorials. Evidence of recent limbing could be seen.