

Provincetown Cemetery Commission
Public Meeting
November 7, 2018
Minutes

Call to Order: 3pm

In attendance

Commission Members: Susan Avellar, Michael Harpie, Lynne Martin, Dawn Walsh

Invited Guest Presenter: Candace Currie from Green Burial Massachusetts

Community Members: Jeanne Burke, Jen Kopec, Mary Jane Samuel

1. Minutes of October 3, 2018: Moved to approve as presented, Michael Harpie, 2nd Susan Avellar, Vote: 4 0 0
2. Cemetery Plot Sales – 2
3. Presentation on Green Burials by invited guest Candace Currie from Green Burial Massachusetts, a 501 c 3 volunteer-run non-profit organization that provides education, advocacy and technical assistance. Presentation included:
 - Essential Elements of Green Burial – unembalmed body, biodegradable coffin or shroud, no concrete grave liner or vault
 - Additional characteristics of Green Burial – natural, flat or no marker, often grave opening and closing by hand, backfill mounted, 3-5 foot depth, higher density, order of burials non-sequential
 - Green Burial demand growing across nation, reasons why include: environmental; philosophical/spiritual; desire for more hands-on, DIY, community-engaged experience; financial
 - Examples of Green Burial in Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Boston (where Candace worked for many years and was instrumental in bringing Green Burial to Mt. Auburn): natural burials along pathway with low-raised marker for communal listings, 3x8 ft/unique burial, mapping system by lot#, some natural burials between lines of conventional graves as a good way to extend cemetery space
4. Comments from cemetery commission and response from Candace as applicable:
 - Lots of unclaimed lots in Provincetown that potentially could become natural burial plots
 - What about sandy soil conditions? Sides of grave can be kept in place with plywood until burial, Steelmantown Natural Cemetery in Cape May, NJ (beach town) good/successful example of this practice
 - Participation in natural burial can provide emotionally positive lasting experiences and memories
 - Concern about hand digging of grave – wouldn't want just anyone digging
 - Would want to allow greater marker options
 - Wish DPW were here – need to have their input and be able to address their concerns
 - What about communicable diseases? Centers for Disease Control, the World Health Organization, and the Pan-American Health Organization have all published data stating unembalmed bodies are not a public health threat

- Opportunity for meaningful, community-engaged hands-on death care.
5. Comments from community members:
 - Brings death care back into the hands of family, friends and community
 - Love the option and the positive environmental impact
 - Opportunity for meaningful death practices, more akin to personal values
 - Option is important to have, need to educate/inform public of option
 6. Next step:
 - Dawn will contact Steve Wlodkowski, DPW Deputy Director to arrange a meeting to share green burial information, receive input and address concerns.
 7. Meeting adjourned: 4pm
 8. Next meeting: December 5, 3pm

Respectfully Submitted:
Dawn Walsh