

MINUTES
CEMETERY COMMISSION MEETING
SEPTEMBER 18th, 2020

Present: Michael Harpie, Sharon Bunn, Christopher Brooke, Dawn Walsh, Lynne Martin; Michael Chute (via tel.)

Invited Guests: Brian Cowing, Cemetery Supervisor; James Keefe, Gately Funeral Home; Jason Brown, phenomenal volunteer

Green Burial Discussion

As of the date of this meeting, there has been one green burial. Brian Cowing, DPW, proposed that the Cemetery Commission consider increasing the charges for green burials. He has heightened concerns about safety, and the fact that the designated area for up to 30 green burials is proximate to vault burials, because of the likelihood of sinking, since a conventional concrete vault cannot be used for green burials:

- additional yards of sand;
- burial site corner markers;
- machinery to dig holes, and;
- additional DPW employee labor.

Mr. Cowing clarified that because of safety concerns, the DPW Commissioner has stipulated that only DPW employees are allowed to dig cemetery plot holes. Mr. Cowing also explained that the DPW must use a crank-operated lowering divide to lower the body into a hole.

Dawn Walsh proposed exploring the potential solution of a bottomless concrete vault for green burials, which could alleviate the likelihood of sinkholes and allow for the natural decomposition of bodies. She is aware that such vaults are used in other U.S. locations for green burials. After further discussion and unanimous feedback from meeting attendees that her proposed solution could be a potentially viable way to solve the issues raised by Mr. Cowing, Jim Keefe (Gately Funeral Home) agreed to research the availability of such vaults and forward specifications information to Mr. Cowing and Mr. Harpie.

Depending on the outcome of our findings, we may need to obtain further approval from Select Board.

Plot Sales

We approved 8 new plot sales

Cemetery Finances

Jason Brown has received in excess of \$820.00 in new donations, nearly doubling our Gift Fund Dollars since he began his volunteer work in the Winthrop Street Cemetery. The Commission voted unanimously to approve another invoice to cover the cost of his materials. His invoice is for a total of \$253.58 plus an additional \$75.00 which should enable him to meet his goal.

Winthrop Street Cemetery

Keeping on the subject of Jason Brown..... Jason gave us all a “tour” of the incredible, painstaking, and meticulous work he has been doing in the Winthrop Street Cemetery. Even at a glance of the cemetery, it is evident how much better the stones and monuments appear. Up close, Jason showed us his techniques for cleaning the stones and amazed us with some before and after examples of how his work has made such a difference. We touched on the possibility of spraying the stones annually with the D2 product and perhaps a newspaper article telling about Jason’s work which might generate even more donations. Jason has created some social media information, as well, which has been helpful in generating money to our Gift Fund. Bravo, Jason! Well done. As there have been many volunteers over the past few years in our cemeteries, we will make sure they are acknowledged and thanked in an appropriate way.

Alden Street Cemetery-Hamilton/Gifford Cemeteries

Brian Cowing and the DPW have been doing a wonderful job of maintaining the cemeteries. There is a very noticeable improvement in their appearances. Thank you! Mike Harpie asked the Commission Members to come up with ideas for replacement signs that state the Cemetery Rules, for the next meeting. Unfortunately, people are still breaking the rules quite often. If we are to enforce the rules, the new signs should be installed at significant locations to be easily seen.

Meeting finished at 2:30PM Next meeting date/time TBA.

Sharon Bunn and Michael Harpie

Cemetery Commission