

Provincetown Cemetery Commission

Meeting Minutes

Date: January 12, 2022

Location: Town Hall Caucus Room

Call to order: 3:01PM

In attendance:

Sharon Bunn (SB), Michael Chute (MC), Michael Harpie (MH), Lynne Martin (LM) (via telephone), Chris Brooke (CB) (Alternate).

Excused absence: None

Unexcused absence: None

Also attending: Emmett Catanese (EC), Town Clerk, Brian Cowing (BC), Cemetery Supervisor

Supporting materials: Deed for Lot B35

1. Public Statements: None

2. Review of minutes of previous meeting: Changes to draft minutes were made and approved.

Motion to approve: CB

Second: MC

Vote: 5-0-0

3. Cemetery Supervisor Update:

- Per BC: All new signs installed in Alden St/Hamilton/Gifford Cemeteries.
- Winthrop St Cemetery stair modifications and ongoing maintenance discussed with the possibility of utilizing periodic volunteers, including AmeriCorps.
- BC will replace old, rotting white picket fence with same around the Mayflower Memorial in Winthrop St Cemetery, as well as remove the dead pine tree next to the monument. If there are other dead trees that the Commission would like removed, we are to put an orange ribbon around the trunks.
- Building and Grounds is willing to continue with gravestone cleaning in cemeteries when time allows.
- BC stated that mowing is done on a regular schedule throughout the year and BC/DPW inspect cemeteries daily.
- BC reminded us that any request from the Commission will gladly be done. He asked the Commission to be sure to communicate with him, if we would like anything done.
- On SB's request, BC confirmed that he will attend our Feb. 9th, 2022, meeting to discuss his ideas for improvements at the Alden/Hamilton/Gifford cemeteries.

4. Cemetery Business:

- The process of selling cemetery plots was analyzed and discussed again with EC to ensure that, in consideration of the definition of "Resident" in the current Rules and Regulations (Approved by the Select Board January 6, 2022), only those persons who are eligible to purchase plots will be able to do so.
- Review of Article 1: Definitions, "***Resident shall mean any person who currently maintains a primary residence in Provincetown or has previously resided in Provincetown at any time for at least ten years as evidenced by the Town's records or otherwise to the satisfaction of the Commission.***" (*Italics added*).

The following approaches and practices for thorough vetting of applications were discussed so the Town Clerk and Cemetery Commission can effectively work together to verify if residency requirements have been satisfied before the plot purchase is finalized. General agreement to refine and implement these procedures was reached:

- The burden of proof for meeting the definition of a “Resident” in the Rules and Regulations is on the applicant.
- The Cemetery Commission has sole authority to approve or deny plot purchases.
- In the case of co-applicants to purchase a plot, all applicants must meet the definition of a Resident.
- Upon receipt of a completed application to purchase a plot, the Clerk’s Office will continue its practice of sending a written reply to the applicant with a complete copy of the Cemetery Rules and Regulations, explicitly pointing out that there is a residency requirement the applicant or applicants must meet to purchase a plot. A Checklist of acceptable documentation of proof of residency in Provincetown will also be included in the Clerk’s correspondence. (The Checklist will be developed by the Cemetery Commission with input from the Town Clerk).
- The Clerk’s Office will check the data bases available to it to try to verify an applicant’s or applicants’ primary residency in Town. If primary residency cannot be verified by the Clerk’s Office, applicant(s) will be notified that they need to submit documentation to prove they are a primary resident. The Cemetery Commission Chair will also be notified by the Clerk’s Office.
- MH offered to confirm applicants’ ownership of a residence in Town by verifying ownership through the Assessor’s Office, if needed.
- Applicants claiming residency for at least 10 years who do not currently own property in Town will need to provide proof of having resided in Provincetown for a total of at least 10 years (cumulatively or consecutively).
- The Commission will invite applicants whose primary residency, or residency for at least 10 years, in Provincetown is in question to attend a monthly Commission meeting so they may have an opportunity to discuss their application and present additional documentation of proof that they meet the eligibility criteria.
- The Clerk’s Office will not accept payment for a plot until after eligibility to purchase a plot has been confirmed to the satisfaction of the Cemetery Commission.
- MH volunteered to prepare a draft copy of the Checklist of Acceptable Documentation to present at the next meeting for revision/approval by the Commission.
- Personal documentation submitted by an applicant will be treated with confidentiality and returned to the applicant or shredded.
- A procedure to expedite applications for plot purchases in emergency situations (e.g., unexpected death) should be developed as soon as possible.

5. Cemetery plot sales:

- (1) Approved for Lot B35, Patrick Ian Patrick

Motion to approve: MC

Second: C B

Vote 5-0-0

- (1) SB brought up the subject of an unsigned deed for the purchase of a double lot by two people who own property in Town. The matter was tabled for a future meeting due to questions raised by MH about whether the applicants meet the requirement as primary residents.

6. Cemetery buy-back requests: None

7. Other Business that may Come before the Cemetery Commission That Could Not Have Been Reasonably Anticipated Pursuant to MA Open Meeting Lawⁱ:

- Application for membership on the Cemetery Commission by Tim Famulare (TF) was unanimously accepted by the Commission. SB will follow up with Clerk's Office to determine which vacancy Mr. Famulare could occupy given that there is a regular vacancy and an alternate vacancy.

8. Review of action items:

- MH will develop a draft Checklist of Acceptable Documentation
- SB will speak with Clerk re: TF's application to join the Commission
- SB will follow up with BC re: progress of volunteers working in Winthrop Street Cemetery
- SB will email the applicants who wish to purchase a double plot and about whom there are questions about eligibility to invite them to attend a future meeting

9. Date of next regular meeting: February 9th, 2022 @ 3:00PM in Caucus Hall, Town Hall

10. Adjournment:

Motion to Adjourn by: SB

Second: CB

Vote: 4 -0-0

Meeting adjourned at: 4:25PM

Respectfully submitted by: Michael P. Harpie, Cemetery Commissioner

ⁱ At this point in the meeting agenda, MH had to leave to deal with business matters in the Town Hall department in which he works).