

Provincetown Cemetery Commission

Meeting Minutes

Meeting date: October 12, 2022

Location: Winthrop Street Cemetery, 43 Winthrop Street, Provincetown, MA 02657

Call to order: 3:00 PM

In attendance:

Sharon Bunn (SB) (Chair), Michael Chute (MC) (via phone and in-person), Lynne Martin (LM) (Vice Chair) (departed at 3:37 PM), Michael Harpie (MH), Timothy Famulare (TF) (Alternate), Robert Sweetman (Alternate) (note: some items were done out of order to accommodate LM for a planned early departure)

Excused absence: None

Unexcused absence: Christopher Brooke (CB)

Also attending: Brian Cowing (BC) (Cemetery Supervisor)

Supporting materials: (List documents, photographs, maps, and drawings)

- SB's October 11, 2022, letter to Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager re: Community Preservation Act Grants for Historic Preservation
- Green Burial FAQs (Draft 3)

1. Public comments, if any: None.

2. Review and approval of minutes:

| | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| August 17, 2022, Minutes | Motion to approve by: SB | Second by: MH | Vote: 5-0-1 |
| Sept 14, 2022, Minutes | Motion to approve by: SB | Second by: LM | Vote: 4-0-2 |

3. Chair's report:

- Letter to Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager re: Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds grant writer and administrator for the Cemetery Commission:
 - SB shared that a letter she emailed to the Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager regarding town resources available to aid with future grant applications, confirming current funding of the 3 current CPA grants and support for bidding process required for current CPA grants. **ACTION:** SB will await response and report to commission.
 - BC shared that initially some monies were withheld from the Winthrop Street Project for satisfactory completion of issues but were eventually paid.
 - MH confirmed that indeed the Cemetery Commission has 3 CPA grants and funds are still there. Unspent CPA funds never expire. He also indicated that he has located some boxes, in a couple of locations, containing hard copy files of information related to the current grants. He suggested that he, SB, and LM meet to review the material. Parties agreed.
ACTION: MH will reach out to SB and LM to review material prior to next meeting.
- Contact made with Nickerson Funeral Home Re: attending a meeting to discuss Green Burials:
 - SB contacted the Christopher Luciano, Operations Manager of the Nickerson Funeral Home (NFH) in Orleans. He is willing to attend the November Cemetery Commission meeting to share their experience with green/natural burials. They have performed ~10-12 such burials for several lower and outer Cape towns (excluding Provincetown). BC also indicated it is an opportunity to share with NFH the Provincetown-specific requirements given the differences between private and public cemeteries and difference in soil composition as well.

Provincetown Cemetery Commission

Meeting Minutes

4. Cemetery Supervisor updates and discussion:

- Recommended placement of the Revolutionary War Patriots informational sign from previous CPA project at Winthrop St Cemetery:
 - BC recommended placement of the support for the steel Revolutionary War Patriots sign to be at the Court St entrance to the Winthrop Street Cemetery, to the right of the entrance, exterior to the granite/steel railing and visual aligning with the “Welcome” sign (which is interior to the railing). After the installation, the plaque will need to be created and installed into the support. Commission agreed with proposed placement. The sign would be approximately 36” x 22”.
ACTION: BC to arrange support installation.
ACTION: Cemetery Commission to arrange for printing and installation of sign graphics.
- Update on monument and marker cleaning at Hamilton St Cemetery (BC and RS):
 - BC reported that some left over D2 has been located but not in his possession yet. Other needed supplies have been obtained. Melissa (admin asst.) from DPM has ordered more D2. RS has been trained and would start in Gifford Section. Optimal weather is warm so at this point work will need to be pushed to Spring/Summer.
- BC reported that a Winthrop St Cemetery granite fence post on Court Street was damaged, presumably from an auto/truck, and will need to be replaced. Police had notified BC. BC will contact Cape Cod Stone for replacement.
- BC reported that DPW will be able to purchase and store a few vaults on-site that will facilitate the process of preparing for burials at the Alden St Cemetery.
- BC reported the cleaning up on Court Street section of the Winthrop St Cemetery continues to make progress.
- BC and SB shared an inquiry as to size of monument for a three-grave lot at the Alden St Cemetery. Rules and Regulations only provide sizes for a single, two- or four- grave lot. SB contacted the inquirer who settled on choosing a monument of the approximate maximum dimensions for a two-grave lot. Changing the Rules and Regulations to include maximum allowed dimensions for a 3-grave lot was felt to be unnecessary as there are no more three- grave lots that do not have a monument.

5. Unfinished business:

- **Green Burials:** Review/Revise 3rd draft of *Green Burial FAQs*. (TF):
 - TF asked BC re: feasibility of green burials in winter. BC confirmed that cemetery staff can break frozen ground to accommodate. BC confirmed that notice of 24 hours is adequate.
 - TF reviewed green burial guidelines from towns of Brewster and Westford for context as the commission works to finalize guidelines for Provincetown.
 - The commission acknowledges the importance of finalizing the document to serve as a reference for families considering a green burial without the support of a funeral director as well as for funeral directors to understand town-specific requirements. The commission is also thankful for the efforts of TF in this endeavor.
 - Editorial correction in the 4th bullet under **Requirements for Green Burials in Provincetown:** vault covers are placed and lowered by the cemetery staff and not the vault company.
 - BC indicated that to date Provincetown has conducted 3 green burials.
 - TF shared that in his review of online sources he has noted that “natural” and “green” descriptors are used interchangeably.
 - Commission will consider best term(s) to use going forward considering search functions on Town website and for consistency across documents (e.g., Rules and Regulations, FAQs).

ACTIONS:

- TF will email latest draft of *Green Burial FAQs* to SB to forward to commission members and BC for review prior to November meeting.

Provincetown Cemetery Commission

Meeting Minutes

- SB will forward the draft *Green Burial FAQs* and current Town of Provincetown *Cemetery Rules and Regulations* to General manager for NFH. Goal would be to gain input from NFH, commission members, and finalize the *Green Burial FAQs* and any revisions pertaining to green burials in the *Rules and Regulations*.

6. New business:

• **Cemetery Rules and Regulations (SB):**

- Review and revise the Cemetery Rules and Regulations definition of “Resident” to address continued confusion regarding eligibility to buy plots:
 - SB/TF discussed that most of confusion is around the phrase: “...previously resided in Provincetown at any time for at least ten years.” Discussed potentially deleting “previously” might provide clarity. RS felt the use of “resided” in this context could be confused with the more straightforward definition of “primary residence” and might benefit from a different verb such as “has lived in Provincetown at any time for at least...”
 - Further discussion is needed, and this item will be continued to the next meeting.
 - Suggestions for other Articles, or Appendices, to revise:
 - Discussion focused primarily around “resident” language so will need to be revisited.
 - Set target date to complete draft revisions:
 - Commission consensus to have revisions finalized by end of January 2023 meeting.

• **Attendance at regular meetings and whether to develop a policy (LM/SB):**

- LM proposed Cemetery Commission formally implement the rule re: unexcused absences applicable to appointed commissions and boards on p. 5 of the Town of Provincetown’s *Handbook for Members of Town Boards* (June 2014 / Revised July 2018) (The “*Handbook*”), which states in part:

“A member or alternate member of any Town Board who is absent from three consecutive meetings without informing the Chair shall automatically cease to be a member of the Board. The Chair shall notify the Appointing Authority and Town Clerk in writing. The Appointing Authority shall then follow the procedure...for filling vacancies on Appointed Town Boards.”
- SB spoke about concerns re: the nature of certain reasons given for missing meetings.
- The commission agreed on the need to reinforce the above rule and recognized the impact that excessive unexcused absences have on continuity of the commission’s work, and which potentially prohibits another interested person from making a meaningful contribution to the commission. Going forward, 3 consecutive unexcused absences will result in the member being removed from the commission per the procedure outlined in the *Handbook*, if the member does not proactively resign.
- MC offered to discuss situation with a current member with some unexcused absences.

7. Other business that may come before the Cemetery Commission that could not have been reasonably anticipated pursuant to MA Open Meeting Law: None

8. Cemetery plot sales: None

9. Cemetery buy-back requests, if any: None

10. Review of action items:

- **SB** will update members on any response from Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager to letter re: support for CPA grants.
- **MH** will reach out to **SB** and **LM** to schedule a date to review CPA hard copy files prior to next meeting.

Provincetown Cemetery Commission

Meeting Minutes

- **SB** will confirm with Operations Manager at Nickerson Funeral Home that he is able to attend the November 16, 2022, commission meeting.
- **SB** will notify the Office of the Town Clerk re: the date of the rescheduled November meeting, request that the date is updated on the Cemetery Commission's Town webpage, and confirm the Caucus Room reservation.
- **TF** to email the latest draft of Provincetown Guideline for Green Burials to commission members and BC for review prior to November meeting.
- **BC** to arrange installation of support for Revolutionary War Patriots informational sign.
- **MC** to discuss attendance issues with relevant member and advise SB of outcome.
- **ALL** Review Rules and Regulations for suggestions to revise the "Resident" definition and other sections that may need modifications prior to the November meeting.
- **BC** to contact Cape Cod Stone re: replacement of granite support on Court Street.

11. Date and location of next regular meeting: Due to special town meeting on November 9, 2022, the November meeting will be moved to November 16, 2022, at 3 PM.

12. Adjournment: 4:27 PM

Motion to approve by: SB Second by: MC Vote: 5-0-0

Respectfully submitted by: Robert Sweetman

October 11, 2022

Alex Morse, Town Manager
Town of Provincetown
amorse@provincetown.ma-us

Dan Riviello, Assistant Town Manager
Town of Provincetown
driviello@provincetown.ma-us

**Re: Town of Provincetown Cemetery Commission
Community Preservation Act Grants for Historic Preservation**

Dear Mr. Morse and Mr. Riviello:

My name is Sharon Bunn, and I am the chair of the Provincetown Cemetery Commission.

I am writing to inquire about the administrative supports that are available for the Cemetery Commission's activities to preserve Provincetown's important historic cemeteries through the Community Preservation Act (CPA) Fund. My initial research shows that there are three (3) CPA grants that were awarded to the Cemetery Commission between 2016-2020 for conservation and preservation of old monuments and stones at the Alden St Cemetery, Old Section.

Specifically, the Cemetery Commission seeks to learn who on the Town staff are available to serve as the Cemetery Commission's point person(s) for its CPA grants, and the following information and support needs:

- confirming funding balances of previously awarded grants
- obtaining copies of grant applications with unspent balances
- initiating and managing the bidding process for awarded grants
- supervising projects
- writing and submitting new grant applications

I recently met and exchanged emails with Michelle Jarusiewicz, Community Housing Specialist, who said that although she helped with implementation of a few Cemetery Commission preservation projects in the past (on or about 2000), she has no current responsibility to help the Cemetery Commission with its CPA grants. She also confirmed that there are several CPA funded projects that need to be put out for bid and will require supervision but did not supply details. Ms. Jarusiewicz informed me that previously, the Cemetery Commission's CPA grant application submissions were done solely by the Cemetery Commission. There are no current members of the Commission who have the experience and/or time to complete such tasks.

I would appreciate an email reply by Friday, October 28. I would also like to invite you or your designee to attend the Wednesday, December 7, 2022, Cemetery Commission meeting to discuss how the Town can support the Cemetery Commission in its goals to preserve our historic cemeteries. We meet monthly from 3:00-4:30 pm in the Caucus Room at Town Hall.

Sincerely,

Sharon Bunn

Sharon Bunn
Chair, Cemetery Commission
sbunn7451@gmail.com

Mobile: 617-888-4693

Cc: Emmett Catanese, Clerk, Town of Provincetown
ecatanese@provincetown-ma.us

What is a Green Burial?

- Green Burial is a means of burial that allows the body to decompose naturally, returning all elements to the earth through environmentally sound practices. The interment occurs without embalming or a grave liner

Requirements for Green Burials in Provincetown:

- Green Burials may only occur in the designated area in the Upper section of the Alden Street cemetery.
- The body must not be embalmed.
- The body may be
 - wrapped in a biodegradable shroud (cotton, wool, silk, hemp, etc.) and buried on a natural burial trundle (wooden tray with handles), or
 - placed in a coffin made solely of biodegradable materials (cardboard, wood, willow, bamboo, seagrass, felt, etc.) *and* free of any varnishing, metals, or other toxic or non-biodegradable materials, or
 - placed directly onto the earth without a trundle or a coffin.
- Given the sandy nature of the cemetery grounds, all burials require the use of mechanical lowering devices, operated by cemetery staff, and the use of a vault with cover, which shall be placed only by vault company employees. **Bottomless vaults must be used for Green Burials.**
- If a green burial cannot be prepared due to practical constraints and the body must be cremated, cremated remains within a biodegradable container may be placed in a grave that has been designated for a natural body burial.
- ***[What happens with bodies for Green Burial during frozen ground conditions?]***

Managing the Arrangements for Green Burials:

- **A funeral home may handle all arrangements.**
- **Families and others may care for the deceased.** In Massachusetts, it is legal to care for the deceased without using a funeral home. The deceased may remain in the home. Family may handle the administrative tasks, may transport the deceased to the cemetery, and may conduct a service without a funeral director. **If not using the services of a funeral director, arrangements should be made to have a town representative present to oversee cemetery procedures.**
- **A hybrid, or combination, may be used** (where the funeral home provides some services and the family provides others). For example, a funeral home may be asked to take care of administrative tasks (the “paperwork”) and the family handles other arrangements. Any funeral director in Massachusetts may be used. Funeral homes should be contacted to determine the services they provide and the costs.

Green Burial Procedures when a loved one dies (to be handled by a funeral home or family):

- **Death certificate:** A family designee or funeral director will need to obtain a disposition permit (“burial permit”) prior to moving a deceased person. Obtaining a death certificate entails working with the medical certifier and the Town Clerk (burial agent) to facilitate the entry of the

death record into the Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS). Death certificates should be filed as soon as possible so that the deceased's remains may be properly interred.

- **Disposition/Removal permit:** Once the Death Certificate is initiated in EDRS, a Disposition/Removal Permit (a permit to transport a body and dispose of it by burial, cremation, or donation to a medical school), is issued by the Burial Agent in the town where death occurred. In Provincetown, the Burial Agent is the Town Clerk.
- **Provincetown DPW arrangements:** The Cemetery Superintendent (insert contact info) at least 24 hours before the interment. Opening and closing of the grave must be done by Town Cemetery staff; family or friends of the deceased may not open and close the grave.
- **Preparing the deceased for burial:**
 - If home funeral care is chosen, certain funeral homes may be willing to offer education or guidance, as do home funeral guides. Care of the deceased may include natural, non-invasive procedures, and keeping the deceased cool with dry ice, Techni-ice, cooling blankets, open windows, or other methods. Families and friends may choose to bathe and dress the deceased at home and provide care for one to three days, depending on what the family wants and the burial schedule permits.
 - A funeral home may prepare and shelter the deceased until burial. Some funeral homes have refrigeration facilities and allow visitation of unembalmed bodies. Contact funeral homes for options and fees.
- **Container:** Containers or shrouds for burial in Alden Street Cemetery must be biodegradable. They can be homemade, made by a carpenter or cabinetmaker, or purchased from funeral homes, retail stores or online. The container holding or wrapping the deceased must be free of visible bodily fluids for burial.
 - **Shrouds and Shrouding Boards:** A shroud is a cloth used to wrap and cover a body after a person has died. Green burial shrouds must be made of natural, biodegradable materials such as wool, cotton, linen, bamboo, or hemp. A shrouded body may be placed inside a biodegradable casket, but a casket is not required. A shrouded body without a casket must be entirely wrapped and placed on an untreated softwood (such as white pine) or wicker shrouding board, which meets the same biodegradability requirements as caskets (see below). The board will help stabilize the body while being transported and lowered into the grave and will remain inside the grave. Plywood and particle board are not acceptable. A board with carrying handles that is at least as wide and as long as the body is recommended; please notify the Cemetery Department if a board will exceed 28-inches in width and 84-inches in length. Some shrouds have carrying handles sewn into the cloth and sleeves sewn into the bottom in which a narrower board can be inserted; the narrower board is acceptable since the body and board are held snugly together with ties, providing stability.
 - **Caskets:** Caskets may be constructed from untreated softwood, wicker, cardboard, or other natural, biodegradable materials, and must not be painted with toxic paint or varnish. They should be of sufficient strength to support the weight of the body. Wooden caskets should be held together with wooden dowels and non-toxic glues rather than metal fasteners. To minimize environmental impact, we recommend obtaining locally-made caskets. Some people prefer to make their own, using locally-sourced or repurposed materials. Handmade caskets should conform to standard casket size; please notify the Cemetery Department if an oversized casket will be required.

- **The obituary or death notice:** Print or online publications should be contacted to determine their requirements and costs.
- **Transportation of the deceased:** The deceased may need to be transported from a health care facility, to and from a home or funeral home, and to the cemetery. If crossing city or town lines, you must obtain a Disposition/Removal Permit prior to transporting the deceased.

Additional information

- **Scheduling:** Some nursing homes and hospitals have schedules for removing the deceased that might make it challenging for families to manage the necessary paperwork themselves, especially on weekends or holidays. In these instances, it can be helpful to hire a funeral director to handle the administrative requirements and transportation.
- **Home funeral guides:** Home funeral guides can assist a family with certain arrangements but are not licensed funeral directors and do not do the work of preparing the deceased for burial or providing transportation.

Information resources

Mass.gov: *Issues to consider in preparing for disposition of decedents* www.mass.gov/guides/issues-to-consider-in-preparing-for-disposition-of-decedents

Mass.gov: *Funeral Directors Consumer Fact Sheet* <https://tinyurl.com/ConsumerFactSheet>

Green Burial Massachusetts: greenburialma.org/

Green Burial Council: www.greenburialcouncil.org/

National Home Funeral Alliance (NHFA): *How Funeral Directors Can Support Home Funeral Families* www.homefuneralalliance.org/what-funeral-directors-can-do.html

Funeral Consumers Alliance: funerals.org/

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