

# Provincetown Cemetery Commission

## Meeting Minutes

**Meeting date:** June 14, 2023

**Location:** Provincetown Hall, Caucus Room, 260 Commercial St, Provincetown, MA 02657

**Call to order:** 3:00 PM

**In attendance:**

Sharon Bunn (SB) (Chair), Michael Chute (MC), Lynne Martin (LM) (Vice Chair), Robert Sweetman (RS) Thor Jensen (TJ alternate), Timothy Famulare (TF) (Alternate)

**Excused absence:** Michael Harpie (MH)

**Unexcused absence:** none

**Also attending:** Alan Roth (Resident at 7 Conwell St), Sherry Prada (Deputy Director DPW)

**Supporting materials:** June 14 updated draft of Rules and Regulations, Updated draft of Natural Burials FAQ, Monument cleaning supply receipts, updated schedule for taking meetings minutes

### **1. Review and approval of May 03, 2023 minutes:**

Motion to approve by: RS      Second by: MC      Vote: 5-0-1

### **2. Chair's report:**

- SB continues to receive inquiries mostly from reporters regarding historical private burials at 24 Conwell St which was recently sold. Questions focus mostly around the number of remains that may be present, if the land will be donated to the town, and if the deceased were prohibited from burial in the main cemetery. SB indicates that these questions are either not known to the Commission or not within its purview. LM indicated that the property does have a deed restriction due to remains being buried there and as such it is considered a cemetery.
- Changes to the assignment of commissioners taking minutes. TF will take Aug 9, TJ Sept 13, MC Oct 11 and LM Dec 13. MC and LM may switch in the future. MC suggested to consider a permanent secretary. For now, the commission preferred sharing the effort but agreed that it might be something to consider in the future. See attached revised scheduled.

**3. Public comments, if any:** Mr. Roth purchased plot B42 some time ago and has been following the Commissions natural burial policy. He sought clarification as to if natural burials were allowed at plot B42. He pointed out that the first paragraph in Article 1 of the Rules and Regulations, it suggested natural burials were only allowed in New Alden. SB indicated that originally in 2020, the Select Board did indicate that there was a separate section, but this subsequently has been revised to allow natural burials to be allowed in Alden A, B and New sections. The Commission discussed the need for a bottomless vault with Mr. Roth. He was aware of this and provided the Commission an interesting article highlighting that bottomless vaults are allowed in his faith. Action: This will be corrected in the on-going revision to the Rules and Regulations.

**4. Cemetery Supervisor updates and discussion:** SP informed the Commission that Brian Cowing will be retiring 30 June 2023. Commission noted Brian's dedication to the Commission and the cemetery. SP informed that the title of cemetery supervisor is not a position per se. Supervision of the cemetery falls under the Foreperson of Buildings and Grounds (FBG). A replacement foreperson will be named soon and SP reassured the Commission that they will work well with the Office of the Town Clerk to meet the needs of the community and the Commission, including providing tours of plots as requested by Office of Town Clerk.

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Action: Monitor for successful transition between new FBG and Office of Town Clerk with respect to communication channels and processes and once named, add FBG to meetings. Modified documents as needed to reflect FBC title.

### 5. Unfinished business:

- May 5 monument preservation workshop: RS provided brief summary of workshop which included not only cleaning but repairing of broken foundations and monuments. There may be another one in the future as well. Action: none.
- Progress of monument cleaning at the Alden St Cemetery: RS has completed 39 monuments which include 2 obelisks. Residents often provide positive comments and DPW staff have been supportive. Action: none
- Design of new sign for the stand at the Winthrop St Cemetery: Idea had been to have a map identifying grave of Revolutionary War soldiers. It is uncertain if these data exist. MH may know. TF offered to look into this and suggested that we hire a map person to create the sign. Commission agreed. TF indicated that it is possible that it could be covered under a Community Preservation Grant. Action: TF to explore if these data are available.
- Continue discussing revisions of the current Cemetery Rules and Regulations. Despite Office of Town Clerk having access to only current town census, the Commission felt being listed in the most recent census should also satisfy the definition of "Resident" in the Rules and Regulations. This will be added. Discussed with SP the need to understand the practical implications within the lot specifications. Specifically, if within each lot size, it is a vault number "OR" cremation number or if the intention is "AND." There are also some inter-lot inconsistencies, e.g. a 2 vault lot is twice the size of a single lot but is only allowed 50% more cremations. There was also a consensus to provide a limit in the number of vaults that could be purchased. Most towns have a limit. We will keep the proposed limit as in the current draft. Other suggested changes discussed included a reference to natural burials also being known as green burials and including a redundancy regarding the need for a bottomless vault for natural burials in article 1. Action: SP will provide clarity on the lot capacity issues as above. RS to update current draft.

### 6. New business:

- Reimbursement of RS for purchase of monument cleaning supplies. RS purchased some cleaning supplies (sprayers, brushes, Orvus soap) approximating \$107. SB moved to reimburse from gift fund. MC 2<sup>nd</sup>. Approved 5-0-1
- Request by Charlotte Fyfe, descendant of persons interred in the Capt. William Matheson mausoleum (O484) at the Alden St Cemetery, to place a small granite bench within the plot boundary of the plot. Deferred as Ms. Fyfe was not ready to present request to the Commission.
- Annual Election of Officers: Chair and Vice Chair. SB indicated that after being Chair for a couple of years wishes to no longer be Chair, but will stay on the Commission and nominated RS as chair. LM nominated SB as Vice Chair. Both accepted their nominations. RS as new chair motion to approve SB, 2<sup>nd</sup> MC 5-0-1. LM moved to approve SB as Vice Chair, 2<sup>nd</sup> MC. Approved 5-0-1. Action: SB/RS to notify Town Clerk.

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### **7. Other business that may come before the Cemetery Commission that could not have been reasonably anticipated pursuant to MA Open Meeting Law:**

- Expansion lot for Cemetery: While an area between Alden B and the soccer field was approved at a Town Meeting for cemetery expansion when needed, TF indicated that it is not listed on town documents. TF offered to investigate this. LM created an excel file with the numbers on lot purchases by year for the past 10 years. There was not adequate time to analyze this so it will be deferred until the next meeting. RS asked LM to send the excel file prior to next meeting. Action: TF to investigate re: land allocated to cemetery expansion but appears to have not been recorded. LM to distribute to Commission excel file re: last 10 years of lot sales data.

### **8. Cemetery plot sales:**

- Michelle Pepitone, Executor of the Estate of Richard Pepitone: The applicant subsequently chose to purchase a different plot than the one that was approved for purchase at the May 3, 2023 meeting. MF moved to approve new lot, 2<sup>nd</sup> MC. Approved 5-0-1. Deed for plot B239 was signed. Additional action: None.

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

### **10. Review of action items:**

- TF to explore if these data re: Revolutionary War grave locations are available
- TF to investigate re: land allocated to cemetery expansion not being recorded
- LM to distribute to Commission excel file re: last 10 years of lot sales data
- RS to update Natural Burial FAQ for review and approval at next meeting
- RS to update Rules and Regs current draft per discussions
- RS to update schedule for taking minutes
- SB/RS inform Office of Town Clerk re: new officers and provide new contact information

### **11. Date and location of next regular meeting:** July 12, 2023 at 3:00 PM minutes by MH

### **12. Adjournment:** 4:26 PM

Motion to approve by: SB Second by: MC Vote: 5-0-1

Respectfully submitted by: Robert Sweetman