

Provincetown Cemetery Commission

Meeting Minutes

Date: May 03, 2023

Location: Provincetown Town Hall, Caucus Room, 260 Commercial Street, 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)

Excused absence: Michael Harpie (MH), Tim Famulare (TF) (Alternate)

Unexcused absence: Thor Jensen (TJ) (Alternate)

Also attending: Donna Walker, Director of Diversity and Inclusion, Town of Provincetown

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

- Photo of proposed sculptural monument for Pepitone grave if plot purchase is approved.
- Draft tracked changes to Rules and Regulations agreed upon at the 3/8/23 meeting.

2. Public comments: No public comments at this time.

3. Review and approval of the minutes of previous meeting on March 8, 2023: Motion to approve as written by: SB, 2nd: by: LM, Vote: 4-0-0.

4. Chair's report:

- April 12 meeting disposition: Agenda mistakenly was not posted as required so meeting had to be cancelled.
- Update on March 9 meeting with the Clerk's Office staff and the Cemetery Supervisor regarding processes involving interrelated functions:
 - The Cemetery Supervisor asked whether he could call the Clerk's Office to confirm whether a particular plot is available for sale. The Clerk is new to the position and did not know the answer. She will follow up with the Assistant Clerk. There was a period of about 6 months after the previous Clerk left the position when such information was not communicated to the Cemetery Supervisor. The previous Clerk used to relay this information to him.
 - Going forward, the Assistant Clerk will timely notify the Cemetery Supervisor when plots are sold or bought back by the Town so that the Cemetery Supervisor can paint the plot medallion blue to indicate the plot was sold.
 - The Clerk stated that an individual does not need to be a registered voter in Town to be on the annual Town Census, also known as the Annual Street Listing.
 - The Clerk does not have access to any of the Secretary of the Commonwealth's historical data on the Annual Town Census.
 - The Clerk discussed data access, recording and interface issues:
 - Her predecessor told her the Cemetery Map Online was not up to date. For control of data entry, only the Assistant Clerk will input data in the online map.
 - For about the past five years, there are now multiple portals that don't talk to each other.

- MIS has asked the Clerk's Office to discontinue using a spreadsheet to record cemetery plot data.
 - Re: Modifications to the Application to Purchase a Plot form to be completed by the Clerk's Office:
 - Add attestation such as: "I do hereby attest that this information is true, accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge and I understand that any falsification, omission, or concealment of material fact may subject me to"
 - Add lines for 2nd and 3rd choices of plots.
 - Add date the form is completed by the applicant.
 - LM to look into a workflow option for online payments for plot sales to make the process more structured and efficient.
 - SB recommended developing a separate form for plot modification applications.
 - The Clerk's Office provides administrative support to the Cemetery Commission, including information about any Community Preservation Act (CPA) grants, review of new grant applications.
 - The Executive Assistant to the Town Manager (Elisabeth Verde) is the Procurement Officer for the Town.
 - The Clerk will reach out to the Town Accountant (Nick) to find out the current balances of the CPA grants awarded to the Commission. The Commission is aware that some of the grants have unspent monies.
 - The Commission can request less than \$10,000 without going through the Request for Proposal process. It can get pre-approval from the Select Board with an estimate, and if approved, hire a contractor. Commission would have to go before the Select Board for approval when the bill is received.
 - Discussed having the quarterly financial reports provided to the Commission Chair by the Accounting department.
- SB emailed to Adam Howard of Project VALOR Sailing to request longer dowels for flags at Revolutionary War patriots' graves at Winthrop St Cemetery. She will update the Commission at a later date with any response.
- May 5 monument preservation workshop at Wellfleet Cemetery.
 - RS will be attending and will meet with the DPW to get needed supplies prior to attending.
 - No confirmation was received from the Cemetery Supervisor that he will send an employee to the workshop as previously intended.
 - All costs for this workshop have been covered by a donation by a Wellfleet resident for all attendees.
- Agenda item 7, bullet 1, taken out of order to accommodate the Applicant who was waiting to speak about their application.

7. Cemetery plot purchases and deed modifications

- Michelle Pepitone, Executrix of the Estate of Richard Pepitone:
 - a) Application to purchase plot B13 (5' x 10'): Ms. Pepitone discussed her recently deceased Father's long-standing full-time residency in Town and his strong desire to be buried here. SB added that Mr. Pepitone was a registered voter.
 - Motion to approve purchase of plot B13 by: LM, 2nd by SB, Vote 4-0-0.
 - b) Michelle Pepitone: Request to install a monument on Richard Pepitone's grave: Ms. Pepitone asked for approval to put a sculpture made by Mr. Pepitone, 19" H x 12" W x 17" D and secured to a stone base placed at the required depth. Photos of the sculpture were shown to the Commissioners. The monument will be smaller than the maximum allowable dimensions of a 5' x 10' plot as outlined in Appendix B.
 - Motion to approve placement of monument: RS, 2nd SB, Vote 4-0-0.
- Lisa Henrique, co-owner of Plot B237 (5' x 10'): Request to modify the original Deed to add the name Colby Henrique to allow future burial of his cremains in lieu of a using the 1 allowed conventional vault burial. Discussion about how the number of allowable body and cremation burials per certain sizes of plots are open to interpretation, followed by:

- Motion to approve Ms. Henrique's request by SB, 2nd by MC, Vote 3-0-1. The modified Deed was signed by 3 Commissioners.

5. Cemetery Supervisor's updates and discussion: Brian Cowing (BC) was not present for this meeting, nor was Sherry Prada, Deputy Director, DPW.

- SB mentioned the need to follow up with BC re: his agreement to lower the height of sign holder for Revolutionary War soldiers' graves at Winthrop St Cemetery.

5. Old cemetery business:

- Continued the discussion of revisions of the current Cemetery Rules and Regulations. See: Draft tracked changes to Rules and Regulations agreed upon at the 3/8/23 meeting.
 - Changes of the word "Green" to "Natural" in draft revision were completed.
 - Resident definition: Discussion about whether criteria should read: "most recent town census" only.
 - Agreed to discuss at another meeting whether to limit the number of plots that are able to be purchased per individual, as at this time there are no restrictions. RS found in his 12/2022 survey that many of the outer Cape Cod and the Islands towns have such purchase limits.
 - The topic of the allowable number burials of vaults versus cremation urns in 5' x 10' and 10' x 20' plots in the current Rules and Regulations, Appendix A, was discussed briefly. It was agreed that the respective numbers for these plot sizes in Appendix A are open to interpretation. Commission needs to consult with BC and continue discussion at future meeting(s) in order to ensure that the intended meanings are clear in the revision of the Rules and Regulations.
- Further discussion about the potential for development of the land behind Alden B for burials in order to add more capacity:
 - LM and SB confirmed that Tim Famulare, Alternate, and the Town's previous Conservation Agent, previously confirmed in a Cemetery Commission meeting that the undeveloped land's status as protected conservation land was rescinded (although the sign stating that it is a protected area has not been removed along the boundary with Alden B).
 - LM pointed out that if the DPW garage presently situated at the Alden St Cemetery is relocated as planned, the area on which it sits could also be used for additional plots.
 - Questions/comments about recent trends in the relative future need for more capacity for vault burials and cremation burials, or whether to not any more capacity.
 - Adding capacity for more cremation burials such as with a columbarium was briefly discussed. LM mentioned that when Richard Olson was the Cemetery Commission Chair, building a columbarium was given serious consideration by the Commission.
 - The Commission reaffirmed that accurate data on the number and relative sizes of remaining plots for sale, and the number of plots sold, and their sizes, in the past 12 months, is needed. LM will obtain data from the past 12 months sales of plots and report at the next meeting.
 - SB will contact the Town Clerk for assistance to assist the Commission with the process and report back.
 - MC would like to continue the body composting discussion and also look into the option of tree pod burials, and expanding such potential natural burial options from just in the Alden Cemetery to include other town-owned areas where trees and dirt from the composting could be used.

7. New cemetery business: None.

8. Cemetery buy-back requests: None.

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

10. Review of action items:

- SB: Follow up with Town Clerk re: potential expansion of Alden St Cemetery.
- LM: Follow up with Town Clerk about automating the plot purchase application and payment processes.
- LM: Bring laptop to next meeting to show the map of the Alden St Cemetery and undeveloped land next to the cemetery.
- MC: Provide alternative burial information for Commission.

11. Date of next regular meeting: June 14, 2023, at 3:00PM. Location: TBD

12. Adjournment: There being no further business, SB adjourned the meeting at 4:39 PM.

Respectfully submitted by: Michael Chute