

# Provincetown Cemetery Commission

## Meeting Minutes

Date:07/12/2023

Location: Judge Welsh Meeting Room, Town Hall

**Call to order:** 3:01PM

### **In attendance:**

Sharon Bunn (SB), Vice Chair; Lynne Martin (LM), Michael Chute (MC); Michael Harpie (MH); Robert Sweetman, Chair (RS); Tim Famulare (TF), Alt

**Excused absence:** Thor Jensen (TJ), Alt

### **Unexcused absence:**

**Also attending:** Elizabeth Paine, (Town Clerk); Sherry Prada, (Public Works Deputy Director); Peter Attanasio, (Buildings & Grounds Foreperson)

**Supporting materials:** None

### **1. Review of minutes of previous meeting:** (with minor changes, per TF)

Motion approved by: TF

Second: MC

Vote: 5-0-1

**2. Chair's report:** None

**3. Public Statements:** None

**4. Building and Grounds Update:** Brian Cowing has retired. The new Buildings & Grounds Foreperson is Peter Attanasio (PA). The commission welcomed Peter.

### **5. Unfinished Cemetery Business:**

- **Revolutionary War (RW) grave locations:** TF provided an update and in working with Assistant Town Clerk determined that 7 individuals were identified as RW soldiers/patriots with remains of 6 having been identified. MH recalled some prior work on this topic with perhaps a couple of additional identifications. **Action:** MH offered to seek the prior information.
- **Lowering of Winthrop posts for RW map:** RS shared with PA that posts were to be lowered Spring 2023 and estimated that they needed to be lowered ~12-18 inches. LM suggested that be accessible for disabled visitors. **Action:** RS offered to meet with PA to review the task. PA agreed to take a look at it.
- **Rules and Regulations Revision:**
  - **Allowed areas for Natural Burials:** Commission and PA consensus that since bottomless vaults are now required Natural Burials will be allowed in all sections of the cemeteries. **Action:** RS to change affected sections in Natural Burials FAQ and Rules and Regulations.
  - **Limits for lot purchases:** Commission endorsed limits on lot purchases as is done in most towns on Cape Cod and agreed to language in most June 2023 Rules and Regulations draft, (Residents may purchase no more than 1 Four Grave Lot OR 4 Single Grave Lots OR 2 Two Grave Lots OR 4 Single Grave Cremation Lots).
  - **Question as to whether permissible to mix cremations and vault burials in same lot:** For example, is it permissible to have one deceased body **AND** up to 4 cremations in each single plot vs. one deceased body **OR** up to 4 cremations in each single plot (and, of course,

Approved 9 August 2023

multiplied in double, triple, etc. lots)? At present Rules and Regulations do not specify. Final decision: One deceased body **OR** up to 4 cremations per single plot and similar for 2 grave and 4 grave lots. Commission does not have the authority to exhume any potential bodies or cremations. This decision will eliminate any potential issues after someone has been interred in a lot and will establish clarity without the possibility of having to disturb or exhume remains of anyone already buried. **Action:** RS will modify Appendix A of Rules and Regulations to provide potential lot purchasers clarity that the initial burial, be it cremated remains or a full body, will determine what future remains can be buried in the lot (if any). DPW will also begin assigning and recording utilized cremations spots (e.g. A, B, C, D) in addition to continuing to use confirmatory probe.

- This also led to a discussion with Elizabeth Paine, Town Clerk, on how to better establish who is entitled to make the decision of who may be buried in lots, especially after the purchaser of the lot has died. Ideally the names would be listed at the time of lot purchase. A second page of the deed could be printed for this purpose. The lots are viewed as “real estate” and either the purchaser’s Last Will and Testament shall determine who is entitled to make this decision or if there is no Last Will and Testament or it is not mentioned, tracing back family lineage will be used to make this determination. The Town Clerk, working with the perspective applicant will have this responsibility and the Cemetery Commission will need to sign any revised lot deed. **Action:** None
- **Cemetery Expansion Lot:** Consensus that the wooded area between Alden B and soccer field is part of the cemetery which is supported by Town Maps but not necessarily on all Town Documents. Members recall the expansion lot being approved at an unknown prior Town Meeting. The Commission agreed that if the expansion lot is located within the Cemetery on town maps, this supports it is available for expansion. **Action:** MH to print out Cemetery map with boundaries. RS to investigate location for town meeting minutes archives.
- **Lots sales by year over last 10 years:** LM provided spreadsheet with all lot sales to RS during meeting. RS will prepare 10-year data for review at next meeting.

## 6. New Cemetery Business

- **Cemetery Future:** RS indicated once we have clarity on average number of lots sold per year as well as being comfortable re: status of expansion land, the Commission should focus on potential future directions including but not limited to traditional development of the expansion land, a columbarium, limiting future lots to cremations only, and exploring alternate forms of post-mortem care such as alkaline hydrolysis, human composting and tree-pods or a combination of them all as well as capacity triggers. RS noted that alkaline hydrolysis and human composting are legal in 15 and 6 states, respectively, but there is a bill currently in the MA senate proposing to make both legal. Some of these options may or may not involve the Cemetery Commission but educating ourselves is the first step. RS (tree-pods and alkaline hydrolysis) and MC (human composting) will do some research and provide information sessions in the fall with considerations to invite other Outer Cape cemetery commissions.

## 7. Cemetery lot sales: 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 MA Open Meeting Law: None**

**10. Review of action items:**

- **MH to look up information on Revolutionary War Soldiers/Patriots buried in Winthrop St. Cemetery**
- **RS to meet with Peter Attanasio regarding lowering new sign in Winthrop St. Cemetery**
- **RS to change affected sections in Natural Burials FAQ and Rules and Regulations to reflect that natural burials are allowed in all sections of the cemetery**
- **RS will modify Appendix A of Rules and Regulations**
- **DPW will also begin lettering and recording utilized cremations spots**
- **MH to print out Cemetery map with boundaries-completed post-meeting**
- **RS to investigate location for town meeting minutes archives**
- **RS will prepare 10-year data for review at next meeting**
- **RS and MC prepare for fall lecture series**
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**11. Date of next regular meeting:** August 9, 2023 TF scheduled to take minutes

**12. Adjournment:** Motion to Adjourn

Motion approved by: RS

Second: MH

Vote:5-0-0

**Meeting adjourned at: 4:30PM**

**Respectfully submitted by: Michael Harpie**