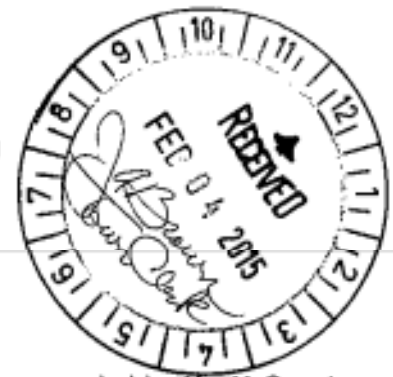


Freetown Cemetery Commission
Minutes of the Tuesday, September 2, 2014 Meeting
Town Hall, 3 North Main Street, Assonet, Mass.



Present: Keven Desmarais, Adrienne Levesque and Mike McCue.

Call to order: Mike McCue called the meeting to order at 6:10p.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of June 26th were received. A motion was made by Mrs. Levesque, seconded by Mr. McCue, to approve the minutes as received. Mr. Desmarais abstained due to absence from the meeting in question; otherwise, the motion carried unanimously.

Superintendent's Report

The July and August reports were received.

Updates on Restoration Projects or Other Properties of Interest

Clark Graves

Mr. McCue reported that he had visited this cemetery with Linwood & Carol Bailey in August after notifying Karen Robitaille, the property owner. The cemetery consists of two graves, one of Asa Clark and one of Thomas Clark. The graves appear to be in good condition with legible headstones. Mrs. Levesque asked what the make of the stones was, and Mr. McCue replied slate and a lighter material, believed to be more of a sandstone. The lettering on the slate stone is immaculate, with minor damage where it appeared to have been struck by a tree limb. The sandstone stone is weathering. Asa Clark is believed to be a veteran of the War of 1812 based on available records. Mr. McCue stated the growth is not bad, with small saplings popping up on the graves. The graves are set back from the surrounding homes in a wooded patch. Mr. Desmarais asked how difficult the graves would be to tend. Mr. McCue felt they could be tended fairly easily with the property owner's consent. Mr. Desmarais agreed to speak to Ms. Robitaille about permission to access and clear a small area around the graves, and to discuss securing written permission. If found agreeable, Heath Chace will be asked to give a price if he's interested.

Crapo Cemetery

Mr. McCue reported that the Baileys and Jeff King have done a yeoman's work on this cemetery. It is looking better and better all the time. Fallen headstones have been righted and Mr. King is now repairing some of the stones that had broken. When the next sign order is placed, one will be for this cemetery. Mrs. Levesque asked what the price of the signs has been in the past. Mr. McCue responded \$78.00 each.

Guilford Evans Burial Ground

Mr. Desmarais reported he spoke with representatives from the Crystal Springs School, and they assured him the cemetery was tended to after they were reminded.

Josiah DeMoranville Family Cemetery

Mr. McCue reported that a fence was installed around the perimeter of the cemetery. Mr. Desmarais reported an access pathway been graded along the east side of the mound to enable access. Discussion was held about cleaning up around the known graves, whether this was advisable and whether the property owner would object. It was noted that the property belongs to Chipaway Corp., not the company installing the solar panels. Mr. Desmarais felt the owner could be approached, and believed that Josiah DeMoranville was determined to be a veteran, triggering the Commission's right to order the grave cleaned. Mr. McCue responded that Mr. Desmarais was correct, Josiah DeMoranville had been determined to be a veteran of the War of 1812. Mr. Desmarais suggested soliciting a quote from Mr. Chace, to see if the area could be cleaned up for short money. This was agreed to on consensus.

Nichols Cemetery

As restoration of this cemetery is only worked on during the winter months, no new information was available.

Assonet Burying Ground

Several items regarding the Assonet Burying Ground were discussed at length, as follows:

(a) Hear/discuss report on the condition of the shed

Mr. Desmarais provided his report on the condition of the old shed at the cemetery:

On or about June 20, 2014 I inspected the shed at the Assonet Burial Ground. I found that the shed is in reasonably good condition for a structure its age but that it is in need of repair and relocation if the commission intends to utilize it in the future. The structure is typical construction for the time period. The walls lack studs and the roof lacks rafters. The shed has settled over time and would have to be raised and properly affixed to a foundation to prolong its usefulness. The shed should be moved if possible to another location in the cemetery that would provide for better access.

Discussion ensued on where to move the shed and what sort of work it would require. Mr. Desmarais felt the northeast corner of the cemetery, near the Byers home, would be a good location if an area could be cleared. Otherwise, moving it to the northwest part of the cemetery near the newer lots was an option, but more prone to vandalism the further it's moved away from neighboring homes. A spot near to the existing homes would also make it easier to connect to electricity if that was ever desired.

Consensus was to investigate the area in the northeast corner of the cemetery. Mr. McCue suggested that if land clearing was needed, that the commission contact Roger Guimond to see if he would be willing to take the wood in trade as he has in the past.

Mr. McCue questioned whether the shed would sit on pilings or a foundation. Mr. Desmarais recommended a foundation, as the existing floor was not in good shape and a foundation would create a solid concrete floor. Mr. McCue suggested adding a small window that would let in light, as the current shed has no light.

Mr. Desmarais felt overall, the shed is in good condition for a structure of its age (approximately 110- to 120-years-old). He also suggested that once the foundation was installed, the building could likely be moved by the skid steer and front-end loader from the Highway Department with their forklift attachments.

A motion was made by Mrs. Levesque, seconded by Mr. McCue, that Mr. Desmarais be asked to provide a materials list and approximate costs for the next meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

(b) Hear/discuss report on resetting several broken headstones in cement

There was no formal report on this matter. Commissioners discussed attempting to reset a few of the stones, either upright similar to some of the stones in Crapo Cemetery or horizontally. It was felt that this would require some additional help, possibly by the Boy Scouts if they are interested. It was agreed on consensus to try and set this up for a Saturday or Sunday afternoon in October.

(c) Hear/discuss report on setting aside an area within the Veterans Section for landscaping

At the previous meeting, it was discussed to set aside three grave lots in the Veterans Section for landscaping, including the flag pole. Discussion ensued now on whether this would be a permanent or temporary feature; whether this was meant to bide time until a broader area could be developed. Mr.

Desmarais agreed to put together some ideas for soliciting designs, fundraising, and other related matters for a future meeting.

Following up on previous discussion, it was agreed that if small brick monuments were placed, they would represent the five branches of the military. These would be made such that if plans changed, they could be moved with moderate effort.

It was agreed that design ideas, or any significant ideas, would be run by the Veterans Agent and/or representatives of the VFW for input as to whether any designs or placements were inappropriate or incorrect.

(d) Discuss trash barrels in the cemetery – abuse of service

Mr. McCue noted that there is an increase in the number of barrels in the cemetery. This has led to further abuse of the service by ne'er-do-wells, including one or more individuals who filled a barrel with take-out refuse. In previous years, barrels were removed entirely and then returned due to complaints. Consensus was to remove the barrels entirely in November, and not return them until the May holidays, then remove them again following Father's Day, and see what response was received.

(e) Discuss working on the well

Mr. Desmarais will provide information on restoring access to the well along with his reports on the materials and costs for the shed project.

(f) Update on surveying and mapping project

It was reported that the mapping project is progressing well. One error was found in Section 30, where a headstone was placed half on the proper lot and half on the adjacent lot. The family was notified. Mr. Desmarais question how that happened. Mr. McCue stated it happened before any of the present commissioners were in office, and since the involved parties were deceased or incapacitated, the reasons could not be known for certain. Mr. Desmarais offered to speak with the family if necessary.

Prices of Graves

Mr. McCue recapitulated the discussion held at the last meeting, and the options of maintaining the status quo or charging different rates for nonresidents. Consensus was to discuss this at greater length at the next meeting.

Discussion was held on prices in the Veterans Section. It was noted that the prices in this section are reduced, but that the cemeteries at Bourne and Agawam are believed to be free. Mr. Desmarais proposed a \$50.00 fee here for all graves, as opposed to the current rates. Mrs. Levesque was agreeable. Mr. McCue agreed to place this on the agenda for the next meeting, including how to deal with the three lots already sold if fees are reduced or eliminated.

Veterans Stones/Markers

Mr. McCue related a story of a marker that was delivered to the town under the direction of a neighboring town's veterans agent after the involved parties were informed this was not to be done. It was previously agreed that stones in the Veterans Section would be delivered to the Town Barn and installed under the commission's guidance to ensure proper placement. All agreed that we have neither the staffing nor resources to install all stones and markers, even though we would like to.

Mrs. Levesque asked what types of stone are permitted in the Veterans Section. Mr. McCue responded that only upright marble VA stones or matching stones are permitted. Mr. Desmarais asked what happens when a cremation lot is purchased. Mr. McCue responded that lots are normally divided. Mr. Desmarais suggested

that in this section, cremation graves be full-sized graves to maintain the arrangement of the headstones. It was agreed on consensus to allow this in this section.

Discussion was held on the arrangement of the stones, and how to ensure precision. Comparisons were drawn to Bourne, Arlington National Cemetery, and the cemetery at Normandy. Questions were raised as to whether they have pre-installed foundations, or what other arrangements they make. Mr. McCue will try and arrange a visit to Bourne to meet with someone who can explain their procedures.

Other Business Properly Before the Commission

Mr. McCue reported that both Richie Brown and the Highway Department crew had mentioned the increase in the number of decorative benches at Assonet Burying Ground, and the difficulty in mowing around the benches. By consensus, an effort will be made to curtail the additions of benches, and damaged benches will be removed. Mr. Brown had also suggested creating walking paths in the wooded area north of the cleared cemetery. All felt this was a good idea and should be pursued, further discussion to come at a future meeting.

Mr. McCue solicited opinions on a situation that had arisen with the Lowe lot (a portion of Lot 10) in Section 15 at the Assonet Burying Ground. Ed Lowe had questioned whether his stone was properly centered. He remembered his father, Daniel Lowe, stating that it was a six-grave lot. Following a survey it was determined that the stone was not centered if it was indeed a six-grave lot. The Lowes do not have a copy of their deed, and the town hall does not appear to have records for a period in the 1970s that would cover this sale. Likewise, the Cemetery Commission does not have copies of deeds before 1979.

Mr. McCue stated that if the Lowe lot is a six-grave lot, it's two feet too narrow by current standards; likewise, if it's a four-grave lot, it's three feet too wide. Lot 11 had also encroached into the original Lot 10 at some point. These mapping and dimensional inconsistencies have been found to be very common in lots sold in the 1970s.

Mr. Desmarais recommended signing over the remaining space to the Lowes if they would pay the recording fee. Mr. McCue estimated the Lowes would end up with an eight-grave lot measuring roughly 21 feet across by 25 feet deep. It was agreed on consensus to make this offer.

It was noted that there are other areas in the cemetery where measurements made in the 1970s may have resulted in lots that are too narrow by the standards of 2014, particularly in Section 18. These are being identified by the surveyors in the course of their work, and if future issues arise, they will be dealt with then.

Mr. McCue reported receiving several inquiries about the supposed Indian burial ground on the old J. R. Gurney Farm, presently the DeMoranville Farm. Mr. Desmarais stated there is a hearing with the Planning Board on September 16th regarding the proposal to install solar panels. Mr. McCue noted the Indian burial ground is registered with the Massachusetts Historical Commission, and he will forward the relevant documents for informational purposes only.

No articles will be submitted for the upcoming Special Town Meeting.

Next Meeting

A meeting will be scheduled sometime in October. The cemetery tour is tentatively scheduled for the Friday following Thanksgiving.

Meeting Adjourned

A motion was made by Mrs. Levesque, seconded by Mr. Desmarais, to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 8:26p.

This is a True Record by me.

Attest: _____
Michael T. McCue, Chairman