

Freetown Cemetery Commission
Minutes of the Monday, October 5, 2015 Meeting
Town Hall, Taunton Hill, Assonet, Mass.

Present: Keven Desmarais, Adrienne Levesque, and Mike McCue.

Call to order: Mike McCue called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

No minutes were available.

Assonet Burying Ground

Mr. McCue reported that he had met with Jeff King regarding repairs to headstones. This project was reviewed, specifically to re-familiarize everyone with the type of stone (marble, limestone) and the fact that those who usually repair stones for us prefer not to work with this type of material. Mr. King reviewed several stones and agreed to forward an estimate, but in discussions during his visit it became apparent that we would not be able to afford the work.

Mr. Desmarais asked about the financial situation, and Mr. McCue responded that there was approximately \$400-\$500 in the perpetual care account; Mr. King had estimated a single stone, between time and materials, could cost \$400. It was noted that some of these stones are severely damaged.

Mrs. Levesque asked about placing plaques on the lots to preserve the inscriptions without necessarily replacing the stones. Mr. McCue stated he was not familiar with exactly the type of plaque being discussed, but felt aluminum plaques could be purchased for about \$18 - \$25 each. Mr. Desmarais asked about brass plaques, but no cost estimate was available. It was agreed to discuss this further at future meetings.

As part of this subject, discussion turned to the perpetual care funds in general. Mr. Desmarais asked what the balance of the endowment for the Assonet Burying Ground is, and Mr. McCue stated it was approximately \$190,000. Mr. Desmarais stated he felt that was low. Mr. McCue stated that it is very low for comparable cemeteries, and then reviewed the history of lot prices and perpetual care. For much of the history of the public cemeteries, perpetual care was not required and seemingly often not requested. Even the private cemeteries are severely under-endowed. Management of the funds was then discussed. Mr. Desmarais asked how the funds are invested. Mr. McCue stated they were trust funds, but he did not know if they are money markets, CDs, or what type. Mr. McCue stated that by statute, it is the exclusive decision of the Cemetery Commission how and where the funds are invested, but that it has never been reviewed by the board members in his ten years. On consensus, the Treasurer and Town Accountant will be asked to educate the chairman on the current situation and possibilities for change.

Turning to the topic of the shed, Mr. McCue stated he found a hard plastic shed at Home Depot that could solve the immediately storage issues until the grander issues of the old shed could be taken on. Mr. Desmarais stated he has a similar shed at his home and felt it would be suitable. Mr. McCue stated the cost of the shed would be approximately \$650, and that it could be paid for either by reducing the mapping allotment or by a combination of the mapping allotment, site improvements fund, and/or perpetual care. All agreed that some sort of reliable storage was necessary. The other suitable shed was price at about \$999. A motion was made by Mr. Desmarais, seconded by Mrs. Levesque, to purchase the "\$650" shed. The motion carried unanimously.

Discussion resumed on the subject of "front-half" cremation lots. The previous discussion was resumed. Mrs. Levesque concurred that smaller or flat stones would be preferable on these lots. On consensus, "front-half" lots will be restricted to flat or smaller slant stones, not to exceed eighteen inches in height. An exception will be made for Earl Hadley's lot as they are already in the process of applying for an upright veterans' stone and the rear half of the lot is owned by Sheri Hadley and has the same type of stone.

Dean Family Cemetery

Mrs. Levesque was brought up to speed on the status of this cemetery. Mr. Desmarais will contact Ashland Chemical (formerly ISP, formerly Polaroid, etc.) to see if they would be interested in volunteering to clean it up as part of their community service program. As an extension of this discussion, it was agreed to designate November 11th as the day for site visits, and to inform the folks from Camp Welch that we would visit this cemetery on that day. Site visits for November will be for the Assonet cemeteries, and a later date will be picked for the East Freetown cemeteries.

Mother's Brook Cemetery

Mr. McCue reported that Tom Copeland would cleaned up around the sign and around the Barnaby fenced lot as requested. Price was very reasonable.

Nichols Cemetery

It was agreed on consensus to contact Ed Lowe to try and learn more about goats and the reasonableness and cost-effectiveness of having goats eat away the brush and other smaller growth at Nichols Cemetery.

State Forest Cemetery

This cemetery will be added to the November site visits as only Mr. McCue has seen it. The overall goal will be to clean up the graves and a small area around the graves, enough that someone can tend to them once or twice a year thereafter. Access has been allowed from neighboring property for this work only, and overall access will be dealt with at a later time. Mr. Desmarais will contact the folks at the forest headquarters to determine if they will clean up the area as it's on their property.

Updates on Trees

Updates on tree projects from the previous meeting:

- ♦ **Plummer Burial Ground** – Marc St. Laurent, arborist, and Moe DeMoranville, Tree Warden, both visited the site to view the trees in question. Mr. DeMoranville added one tree to the list. Mr. St. Laurent provided an estimate of \$4,500 if he could access the cemetery from Simpson Lane, and \$8,500 if he had to access from High Street. This was on account of the added labor for cutting up the trees and carting them across the property to High Street. It was noted that to access from Simpson Lane would require permission to cross private property. Mr. Desmarais stated he had not seen Richard Brown to ask him about this.
- ♦ **All Others** – Tree work will be bid out in the spring bids as it is becoming a larger problem.

Other Business Properly Before the Commission

Brief discussion was held on listing the Assonet Burying Ground with the Massachusetts Film Office. It was felt that were the cemetery ever used for filming, the filmmakers might be inclined to fund some repairs or other projects in conjunction. It was agreed on consensus to list the property and see if anything came of it.

Meeting Adjourned

A motion was made by Mr. Desmarais, seconded by Mrs. Levesque, to adjourn at 5:08 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

This is a True Record by me.

Attest: _____
Michael T. McCue, Chairman

