

Freetown Cemetery Commission
Minutes of the Tuesday, March 31, 2015 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 4:05 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

No minutes were received.

FY16 Budget & Bids

Discussion was held on the FY16 budget. Mr. McCue reported attending the budget meeting with the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee on March 23rd. Both those boards expressed concern with the amount of increase proposed for the cemetery budget, and were dissatisfied with having only one bidder. One member of the Board of Selectmen expressed concern with inquiring whether contractors had insurance and felt that that reference in the request for bids had deterred bidders. Some members of the Finance Committee and the Town Administrator had expressed concern with liability for uninsured people. It was the recommendation of the selectmen and finance committeemen present that the mowings be re-bid.

A question was raised about any comments on the mapping increase. Mr. McCue stated that the only comment made about the mapping was from a member of the Finance Committee who acknowledged the importance of mapping. Mr. McCue also stated that the mapping program proved its value earlier in March, as one burial would have been nearly impossible to figure out without the previous summer's surveying.

Mr. Desmarais felt that insurance was necessary to protect the town from liability should a worker cause property damage or be injured. He stated he was opposed to removing the insurance language. Mr. McCue reminded all present that the bid packet merely asked if the bidder had insurance; it did not require insurance. Mr. Desmarais felt that insurance should be required.

Mrs. Levesque asked whether the prices in the sole bid were atypically high. Mr. McCue stated they were in line with prices in years past. He said that when Greg Myers was mowing, he was getting roughly the same amount, as was Marc St. Laurent in the years before Mr. Myers. He felt that there had been a run of luck in getting workers who wanted less for the same work, but that it was possible that well had run dry.

Discussion was held on there having been only one bid. Mr. McCue said that of the five people who were specifically sent bid packets in the mail, one submitted a bid, one chose not to bid, two did not acknowledge receiving the packet, and two stated that they intended to bid but forgot to turn in their packets by the deadline. This did not include anyone else who may have seen the packets posted in town or online. The one who chose not to bid felt he was not making much money at it and admitted concern about the cost of obtaining insurance versus the income being received.

At this time the Town Administrator passed through and stopped to chat, including a brief discussion with Mr. Desmarais regarding insurance.

It was noted that all interested parties were given the same opportunity, and only one chose to respond. It was also noted that once bids were opened, the sole bidder's prices had become public information and could provide an unfair advantage to others in a re-bid. Mr. Desmarais expressed concern that putting the work back out to bid could cause the sole bidder to file a protest with the state. All acknowledged this would be his right.

Mrs. Levesque asked how the budget has changed over time. Mr. McCue stated the budget was approximately \$2,100 when he started ten years ago and that it had not increased for at least twenty years.

prior to that. In that time, perpetual care accounts had run low and other changes had necessitated increases. He noted that the proposed budget was a little more than \$19,000 – an increase of approximately \$17,000 since 1985 if not earlier. Mrs. Levesque did not feel that was out of line. Mr. Desmarais felt that the budget was reasonable.

Mr. McCue stated the difficulty was in the timing – if the budget was rejected by town meeting, there would be a reason to put the work back out to bid. As it stands now, there is no concrete reason.

Mr. Desmarais felt the best course of action would be to maintain the status quo until the annual town meeting, and then move forward in one way or another after that. He suggested sending a letter to the selectmen and the Finance Committee indicating the reasons why. Mrs. Levesque felt the bidding had been done properly and agreed that a wait-and-see approach was best.

A motion was made by Mr. Desmarais, seconded by Mrs. Levesque, to take no action except to send a letter explaining why no other action was being taken. The motion carried unanimously.

Next Meeting

The next meeting was noted as the first Monday in May. Mrs. Levesque stated she would not be able to attend.

Meeting Adjourned

A motion was made by Mr. Desmarais, seconded by Mrs. Levesque, to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

This is a True Record by me.

Attest: _____
Michael T. McCue, Chairman