

**Freetown Cemetery Commission**  
Minutes of the Monday, June 6, 2016 Meeting  
Town Hall / Assessors Office, Taunton Hill, Assonet, Mass.

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

**Guests:** Travis Bowie, Mary E.R. Brown, Wendy Elsner, and Karen Mello.

**Call to order:** Mike McCue called the meeting to order at 4:14 p.m. It was announced that the meeting would last no more than thirty minutes because of the two town meetings beginning at 7:00.

**Approval of Minutes**

Minutes of April 5th were received. A motion was made by Mr. Desmarais, seconded by Mrs. Levesque, to approve the minutes as presented. The motion carried 2-0-1, with Mr. McCue abstaining.

**Appointment of Superintendent**

A motion was made by Mr. Desmarais, seconded by Mrs. Levesque, to reappoint Mr. McCue as Superintendent of Public Cemeteries for the period July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017. The motion carried unanimously.

**Dean Family Cemetery**

Mr. McCue noted that it was originally intended to schedule a work day to clean up this cemetery, but volunteers have been picking away at it and it may no longer be necessary. Tom Copeland is to spray the site for poison ivy and to kill other ground cover, after which the cedar tree that has been dead at least twelve years will be felled.

**Plummer Burial Ground**

Mrs. Bowie and Mrs. Brown, members of the Historical Commission, and Ms. Elsner, interested party, were present to discuss the naming of the Plummer Burial Ground.

Mr. Desmarais stated at the outset that it was his goal at this meeting to put this issue to rest once and for all. *[See minutes of the meeting held November 12, 2012, for prior history of this subject.]*

Mrs. Brown gave a brief history of the cemetery, surrounding property, and restated the position of the Historical Commission that the name "Plummer Burial Ground" as appearing in the 1902 *History of Freetown* is erroneous. Ms. Elsner continued by providing some history of her family and the Rev. Plummer, as well as the cemetery and surrounding area.

Mr. Desmarais stated that when this subject was raised previously, the Cemetery Commission requested documentation of the name beyond oral tradition. Ms. Elsner responded that the name Hathaway appears on the majority of stones in the cemetery and that everyone knows the cemetery by that name. Mr. Desmarais replied that the desired confirmation was something more along the lines of official documents – a death certificate, a deed, any sort of formal document with that name. Ms. Elsner stated she had documentation with the Hathaway name for the property and surrounding property. Mr. McCue agreed that when the cemetery was title searched it had clearly belonged to the Hathaway family for many generations, but that this was not the same as what Mr. Desmarais was asking about.

Mr. Desmarais noted that the cemetery was shown on maps and other documents as either Plummer Burial Ground or Lawton Cemetery. Mr. McCue added that it was also noted in some documents as "graveyard opposite the Christian church" but never to his knowledge as Hathaway Cemetery.

Mr. Desmarais asked what would happen if in six months a descendent of Rev. Plummer came forward and argued that the name should not have been changed. Ms. Elsner replied that Rev. Plummer did not have any

descendents. Discussion then continued back and forth primarily between Mr. Desmarais and Ms. Elsner regarding how much weight should be applied to various types of evidence of the name.

Mrs. Brown raised the point that although she and her husband have lived in their home for a number of years, they would still consider it the Hathaway house and not the Brown house. Likewise, she offered that if the Rezendes family had a family cemetery, the name would not change from Rezendes Cemetery to Brown Cemetery just in the event that Richard Brown were buried in it, and related that to the concept that this cemetery was always known as Hathaway Cemetery and did not become Plummer Burial Ground simply because the Rev. Plummer was buried there.

Ms. Elsner commented that she was 64-years-old and the cemetery had always been known throughout her life as the Hathaway Cemetery. Mr. McCue stated that he had recently turned 30-years-old and had always known it to be called Plummer Burial Ground. Mr. Desmarais raised the issue of the pit near Sam Ferry's house – at one time it was known as Sandy Bars, and now it's well known as Greaney's Pit. Mrs. Brown agreed and replied that it was still known as Sandy Bars by many. Mr. McCue said that he had only heard the Greaney name within the last few years, and that it was always Rezendes' Pit when he was growing up. Mr. Desmarais cited this as an example of one location with three different names, none of which was wrong, and said that was why the "everybody knows it as this" argument did not carry any weight.

Mrs. Brown asked if there were any other cemeteries in town known as Hathaway Cemetery. Mr. McCue stated yes, the cemetery at Sunderlands' is known as the Hathaway Cemetery. Ms. Elsner noted there was also a Hathaway family cemetery further up High Street. Mr. McCue agreed and stated this is known and signed as Michael Hathaway Burial Ground. Mr. Desmarais asked if that was the cemetery behind Jimmy Rego's house – that cemetery is Payne, this cemetery is on the line between Clarkie's farm and the Borges' grandmother's farm.

Mr. Desmarais suggested placing two signs, or some combination of signs that included both names. Ms. Elsner was not receptive to that idea. Mr. McCue stated his opinion that the Plummer name could not be removed as that is what is most well-known now, whether it's right or wrong – when genealogical inquiries come in, they come in for Plummer Burial Ground, not Hathaway Cemetery. Mrs. Brown suggested that that could be because of the sign; Mr. McCue disagreed, saying the sign had only been up three or four years and the Plummer name had been used in inquiries as long as he'd been on the commission (twelve years) and likely longer.

Mr. Desmarais suggested a Hathaway Cemetery sign, and an educational sign denoting the history of the property, including the stories of how the Plummer and Lawton names came into use. Mr. McCue stated this would be in keeping with previous discussions about including historical information, such as at Quaker Hill. Mrs. Brown added that the existence of the cemetery at Quaker Hill was dubious. Mr. McCue agreed, but said that once the issue was brought up and documentation was uncovered, it had to be fenced off to protect it in the event that it was actually there.

A motion was offered by Mr. Desmarais, seconded by Mrs. Levesque, to remove the Plummer Burial Ground sign and erected a Hathaway Cemetery sign, along with additional explanatory information. The motion carried. Mr. McCue clarified that while the old sign could be taken down fairly quickly, the new sign could be many months away between budgeting and ordering.

At this time, Mrs. Bowie, Mrs. Brown, and Ms. Elsner left the meeting.

Brief discussion continued among the commissioners regarding the content of the new signage. Mr. McCue noted the name signs are a custom cut and minimum orders could further delay the new sign.

**Tree Work**

Brief discussion was held on tree work needing to be done. Bruce Durfee will be asked to look at some of our tree work when he looks at the Conservation Commission tree work at Porter Pasture.

**Meeting Adjourned**

A motion was made by Mrs. Levesque, seconded by Mr. Desmarais, to adjourn at 4:52 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

This is a True Record by me.

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Michael T. McCue, Chairman