

**Freetown Cemetery Commission**  
Minutes of the Monday, February 27, 2012 Meeting  
Town Hall, 3 North Main Street, Assonet, Mass.

**Present:** Keven Desmarais (arrived at 6:55), Adrienne Levesque, and Mike McCue.

**Guests:** Mike Jope, Nathan Jope, and Cheryl Kuechler.

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

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of November 7, 2011, and January 19, 2012, were passed over.

**FY13 Budget**

Consensus was to submit a level-funded budget of \$10,000. Projects suggested for the upcoming year included replacing the fence at the Braley's Cemetery (East), clearing a path from Gramp Deane Road to Tisdale Burying Ground, and clearing growth at Tisdale Burying Ground, along with other possibilities.

**Assonet Burying Ground**

Mr. McCue acknowledged that the remainder of Section 35 had been cleared by the Highway Department during December when the weather was fair. The area cleared crossed the proposed road and ended east of the boulder which was previously suggested as an area for a veteran's memorial of some kind. He also reported beginning work with Tom Daley to map out the new areas of the cemetery. There was some question how the numbers in Section 35 would line up with the fully-cleared area. If renumbering appears necessary, commissioners will instead consider the possibility of designating the eastern portion of Section 35 as a special section for veterans, near to the proposed memorial and numbered independently from the rest of Section 35.

Discussion was held on requesting the Board of Selectmen to sign a perimeter deed for the cemetery property. This was done for the landfill in 2011, and unifies separate parcels. The vast majority of the cemetery exists on a parcel purchased by the Town in 1864. Since the cemetery is now expanding onto the 1956 addition, it was thought advisable to combine the parcels. Mr. Desmarais inquired who would write the deed, and Mr. McCue stated he had already written one. Consensus was to make this request.

Mr. Desmarais reported that he had inquired on section signs from Best Sign, and felt that the best option was to obtain vinyl posts rather than metal due to rust potential. This was agreed to on consensus. Mr. Desmarais also agreed that Debbie Robbins was still interested in donating a flag pole for the cemetery, and this will be taken up in warmer weather.

**Braley's Cemetery (East) & (West)**

Mr. McCue reported that the two cemeteries had been cleared of debris and overgrowth by Heath Chace. In the easterly cemetery, Mr. Chace cleared the southern portion of the cemetery, which was ripe with young growth. The most recent headstone noted in this area was from 1961, showing the growth to be 50 years or less. In the westerly cemetery, Mr. Chace continued the work begun by volunteers several years ago to restore the cemetery. Mr. Chace originally estimated \$900, and submitted a bill for \$950. Mr. McCue felt this was fair since cleaning the known cemetery revealed a large area previously unappreciated.

It was noted that the easterly cemetery has a fence along the railroad owing to the sharp drop from the graves down to the tracks. An inquiry was made to the state with regard to repairing the fence, but it was impossible to determine whose responsibility the fence was as deed references were not clear. Mr. Desmarais suggested the Highway Department could repair the fence inexpensively. Consensus was to pursue this possibility.

Discussion was also held on lot ownership and perpetual care for these cemeteries. Several families are still using these cemeteries for burials. However, there are no known records for either cemetery indicating who may or may not have burial rights, and lot locations are only able to be determined where fencing has been erected. Likewise, the cemeteries presently have no perpetual care account(s). Mr. McCue suggested that going forward, new burials be required to make perpetual care contributions unless some documentation of lot ownership or previous perpetual care payment could be produced. Although no objections were raised, it was decided to delay a final decision until the next meeting to provide time to think this over.

### **East Freetown Cemetery**

Mr. Desmarais reported discussing with Jim Rezendes of K. R. Rezendes, Inc., the possibility of obtaining a boulder to make into a sign. Mr. Rezendes believed they had some boulders that would be available, and Mr. Desmarais will work with the Highway Department to arrange this. A quote will then be obtained for engraving.

### **Edminster Cemetery**

Mr. Desmarais reported speaking with Debbie Pettey about cleaning up the Edminster Cemetery at Bryant Hill Farms. She had no objection to the cemetery being cleaned, and suggested Dean Pettey may be willing to do the work as a volunteer. Mr. Desmarais will follow up on this.

### **Plummer Burial Ground & Nichols Cemetery**

Mr. McCue reported that the Highway Department had spent two days in January clearing brush and debris from the Plummer Burial Ground. Chuck Macomber, Highway Surveyor, suggested it would be wise to rent a wood chipper rather than continue to haul the brush. Mr. Macomber felt, and Mr. McCue agreed, that time with use of a wood chipper would be better spent. Although the town owns a 1972 Mitts & Merrill wood chipper, it was agreed this was not an appropriate piece of equipment for this project, and thought will be given to renting a better alternative.

Mr. McCue also reported speaking with Roger Guimond regarding the trees in the cemetery. Mr. Guimond stated he was nearing the end of the work he could safely do in the cemetery, as many of the trees are of considerable height and size. Mr. McCue offered Mr. Guimond the Nichols Cemetery if he remains interested, and left a message for Jack Conway over the weekend to discuss the right-of-way. As of this evening, Mr. Conway has not yet responded.



*Nichols Cemetery, c.2009.*

### **Rounsevell Cemetery**

Mrs. Kuechler was present as Trustee of the Rounsevell Cemetery to introduce herself to the commissioners and discuss the cemetery. She outlined various projects undertaken in recent times, including the new fence along County Road, the sign and post, and tree removal, along with future projects such as fertilizing. She also brought forward an invoice to be reimbursed for mowing expenses during 2011.

Discussion was held on the way these reimbursements have been handled to date. Mrs. Kuechler's father, Robert Rounsevell, had traditionally submitted bills during each year totalling around \$1,200 for the year. Questions were raised by the town's financial departments about whether this was appropriate. The consensus among the town departments was that bills against perpetual care funds should be addressed directly to the Town going forward, as is done for the Evans and Morton cemeteries. Otherwise, whoever is reimbursed may be liable for taxes.

Mrs. Kuechler stated the money was that of the Rounsevell Cemetery, and not the Town. She was opposed to billing the Town directly for this reason. Mr. McCue felt that while the commissioners agreed in principle, it was not that simple. Some of the money was left specifically to the Town as bequests, making it town money for the benefit of the cemetery. In other instances, people simply used the Town as a bank to hold funds, depositing money with the Town for the benefit of the cemetery. Under the perpetual care law (M.G.L. Chapter 114, Section 25), this becomes a murky area. He noted how the White Cemetery alleviated this issue by withdrawing all their money other than what was added by bequest. Mrs. Kuechler stated the Rounsevell Cemetery was pursuing a trust, but that it was for special projects and not routine maintenance.

Consensus among the commissioners was to sign the bill for reimbursement, and settle the other matters at a later date. Mrs. Kuechler noted she had already scheduled appointments with an accountant and an attorney to discuss matters related to the cemetery, and that she would address the Town's positions with them to obtain their opinions. All parties agreed there were no hard feelings, and that the care of the cemetery was paramount.

### **Tisdale Burying Ground**

Discussion was held on the Tisdale Burying Ground, which rests atop a hill off Gramp Deane Road in the conservation property known as both Porter Pasture and Porter's Shore. At present, the cemetery is in a grave state of neglect. Access is limited, enabled only through winding paths and trails.

All felt that the cemetery should be restored, and this was slated as a project of high priority for FY13. It was agreed to cut a path approximately five feet wide from Gramp Deane Road directly to the cemetery, parallel to the common property line with the Barbozas. A concrete highway bound denotes the property line.

### **Veterans' Cemetery Grant Program**

Nathan Joje of East Freetown, a member of Boy Scout Troop 26 in Myricks, was present with his father, Mike Joje, to complete requirements for his Citizenship in the Community merit badge. Young Mr. Joje asked several questions about this grant program. Mr. McCue explained that the program is in place to help develop veterans' cemeteries like the one in Bourne, and that the federal government pays these costs. The town and/or state must contribute the land, at least 100 acres. He said that although there is much interest in having a cemetery like this in town, no one has come forward to offer the land.

### **Next Meeting**

No further meetings were scheduled.

### **Meeting Adjourned**

The meeting adjourned without vote at 7:25p.

This is a True Record by me.

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