

Princeton Cemetery Commission Meeting – Monday August 17, 2020
Post Office Place – Council on Aging Meeting Room
Minutes

Present: Lynne Grettum, Paul Constantino, Greg Miranda, Lou Trostel, Town Administrator
Sherry Patch (remote via GoToMeeting)

Absent: None

The meeting was called to order by Chair Grettum at 7:11 P.M.

Review of Meeting Minutes from 7/13/2020 and 8/3/2020

The minutes from 7/13/2020 were reviewed. Motion to accept as written by P. Constantino, seconded by L. Trostel, passed by vote of 4-0.

The minutes from 8/3/2020 were reviewed. Motion to accept as written by L. Trostel, seconded by P. Constantino, passed by vote of 4-0.

Update on Superintendent Job Search

The Cemetery Superintendent's job was posted on 8/17/2020. Administrator Patch plans to circulate the listing within the other town departments, and to place a notice in the Landmark.

FY20 Financial Review/FY21 Budget

L. Grettum reported on the FY20 review. Despite her familiarity with the town accounting system, it was not possible for her to fully reconcile the records. Some incoming funds were placed in wrong accounts, although it was all within the cemetery department. She believes the bottom line for the year is accurate.

The budget amount approved for cemetery expenses in FY21 was the same amount as FY20, which is \$30,774. That includes \$9834 for a Superintendent's salary, and \$20,340 for cemetery maintenance. The allowance for maintenance is approximately \$5000 less than the maintenance contract for this year. The cemetery commission is allowed to withdraw up to \$8000 from the cemetery revolving account. It should be possible to cover expenses in FY21, though there is little left over for any extra project work.

Other sources of funds are the revenue from grave opening/closing fees, and revenue from lot sales. The operational fees from grave preparations go into the Cemetery Revolving fund. Revenue from lot sales go into the Lot Sales account. Funds must be transferred from the Lot Sales account into the Cemetery Expense account by Town Meeting, at which point they become accessible for various cemetery expenses. At present, there is \$11,812 in the Revolving account, \$4,987 in the Expense account, and \$27,685 in the Lot Sales account.

Burial Process Update and Communication Procedures

L. Grettum drafted some documents outlining the burial process, and the communication/escalation processes.

The burial process document will outline step by step procedures from the point of initial customer contact (pre-burial) through post-burial paperwork. Lynne is finalizing the draft.

The initial draft regarding communications processes was discussed by the members. Communications were seen to be two-fold, either internally or externally focused, with both areas amenable to improvement.

Internal communications take place between the Cemetery Commission members, and between the members and the Cemetery Superintendent. Other than emails regarding Commission business, such as meeting notices and agendas, these internal communications occur during regular meetings. A current area for improvement regards responses to emergency situations relating to burial procedures. The primary solution is to establish a chain of command within the Commission for issues occurring when the Superintendent is not available. The mission of the Cemetery Commission is currently complicated by the fact that we don't have a Superintendent in place, and there are some practical details involved with locating and marking gravesites which the members are not qualified to perform. However, all situations can be better dealt with after this improvement is in place.

Other internal communications take place between the Cemetery Commission and Superintendent with external vendors and other Town Departments. Establishing a better-defined chain of command and responsibilities within the Commission will help ensure reliable communications in those channels.

External communications are customer focused, and are divided into two categories – information presented to the public on the Town Website, and direct communications with the funeral director, family member or family representative when scheduling and performing burials.

The Town Website presents information to the public regarding the Cemetery Department and Commission. This includes practical information about how to buy plots, arrange for burials, fee schedules, cemetery locations, and so on. There are also listings of the commission members, meetings, and previous agendas and minutes.

Regarding direct communications, the draft document also raises issues such as setting expectations for response-interval times when inquiries are made to the Superintendent, what situations call for an escalation in the communication process, and how to handle escalations. Members thought a reasonable response time might be 24 hours for emergencies and 48 hours for routine inquiries. Before moving on to a final draft, Lynne has some questions to discuss with other Town Departments.

The ongoing issues of obtaining backup personnel for supervising grave preparations, and backup for the equipment and operator required for grave opening, arose as they related to the discussions of burial and communication processes. Supervising the grave preparations is typically performed by the Superintendent. There have been no leads in the search for someone who could temporarily perform that function or act as backup in the future, while we search for a new Superintendent.

We don't currently have a sufficient primary source for the equipment/operator required to open full-sized graves, let alone a backup. The maintenance contractor, Einstein's Solutions, is requiring a 2-week notice which is not suitable for most burial arrangements. One

contractor in town was contacted, and was not available. Communications are open with a second local contractor. More possibilities are being sought. L. Grettum is going to write up a request for equipment/operators to send out in Town News. In the case of the most recent burial involving a cremation grave, the Commission was greatly helped by the personal assistance of Highway Department Superintendent Ben Metcalf.

On other procedural business, L. Grettum noted that the Select Board was asking all town commissions to submit a description of the commission, and listing of members and their time of experience. The Members data was collected, and Lynne said she would draft a description based on Massachusetts state laws/regulations for later review.

Lot Inventory Status

The town is starting to run low on space for new grave lots. The only remaining significant undeveloped area is in South Cemetery; there will be an expense associated with laying out the lots in that section. There may be some additional area in Woodlawn. There are some cremation lots in North Cemetery and some others.

In the long term, the Town will probably need to obtain more land for additional cemetery space. It is less than ideal to establish another cemetery in addition to the 8 already in town. Unfortunately, it does not appear that any of the current cemetery locations are suitable for expansion.

The exact lot inventory status is difficult to assess due to the perennial problems with some of the historical records. The Commission remains hopeful that the records will be improved at some point through the implementation of a Cemetery Management Software package. There has not been time to advance that search lately though it remains high on our agenda.

Items not anticipated by the Chair 48 hours before meeting

A question arose whether we should consider any changes to the fee schedule for purchasing lots or burials. It appears that the cost of grave opening/closing is increasing beyond the price of town fees. G. Miranda is to gather information on fee schedules from area towns for presentation at the next meeting.

Next Meeting

The meeting was adjourned without setting a date for the next meeting, which is otherwise assumed to take place on the third Monday of September.

L. Trostel motioned to adjourn, seconded by P. Constantino, passed unanimously.
Meeting adjourned at 8:18 P.M.

Submitted by Greg Miranda, Secretary
PCCminutes 9.20.2020