

Princeton Cemetery Commission Meeting – Monday March 15, 2021
Remote-Meeting via GoToMeeting
Minutes

Present: Lynne Grettum, Amy Holwell, Andy Brown, Greg Miranda, Lou Trostel, Paul Constantino

Absent: None

The meeting was called to order by Chair Grettum at 7:03 P.M.

Review of Meeting Minutes from 2/8/2021

The minutes from the 2/8/2021 meeting were reviewed without comment, and approved by unanimous vote.

Cemetery Superintendent Report (see Attached for details)

There were no lot sales or burials since last meeting. There are currently 3 burials scheduled in April, after the cemeteries re-open on April 15.

Superintendent Brown reported progress in lining up multiple options for equipment and operators needed to excavate graves for full-body burials. The new parties are Conway Construction and Josh Harding, both from Princeton. Also, Bruce Rollins is available to act as back up for burial procedures if Andy cannot be present.

Superintendent Brown has estimated the cost of full burials at \$700-800, whichever of the available parties perform the work. That is about the same as the current burial fees, which should probably be re-evaluated given the situation.

Completion of the Ollila landscaping project in Woodlawn Cemetery is waiting for final approval by the Conservation Committee, which is evaluating the specific plantings to be installed. A new location has been designated for dumping clean fill at Woodlawn that will not interfere with any wetland buffer zones. New signs have been obtained for posting at the cemetery to clearly distinguish “dumping” and “no dumping” locations.

The Superintendent requested the Commission to consider hiring a part-time assistant to handle the additional maintenance work that is not covered by the mowing contract, and possibly some of the labor associated with burials.

FY22 Budget Update

Chair Grettum reported on the recent meeting during the Selectboard and Advisory Committee Budget Presentation, which she attended with Superintendent Brown. The review board afforded a good opportunity to inform the members about the various maintenance needs of the Cemetery Department, and it was felt that the discussion was fruitful.

The topic of tree removal/maintenance was a recurring theme among multiple parties during the budget presentations, such that consideration is being given to starting a special revolving-

account fund for town-wide tree projects. This might also include planting new trees to replace some that are removed. The expense for removing the large dead tree recently in Woodlawn Cemetery is being paid from the current town tree-removal account, which is very helpful. If new funds from a revolving account were available for major tree work in the cemeteries on a regular basis, that would allow other cemetery improvement projects to be funded from our budget.

There was a question regarding green burial during discussion at the budget review. Progress on this issue stalled after personnel changes last summer and shifts in project priorities. One of the biggest problems had been finding an area in existing cemetery grounds to designate for green burial plots. The issue will need to be re-introduced at a future meeting, and everyone brought up to speed on previous work.

The review panel made a suggestion that we consult with the IT Strategic Planning Committee regarding our search for a Cemetery Management Software package. Chair Grettum will contact the committee to start the conversation.

There was some general discussion, with questions regarding which accounts might pay for some specific projects, such as installing a flagpole at North Cemetery. Final decisions regarding projects for FY22 must wait for budget approvals, to ascertain the actual amount of money available.

Status FY21 Financials: Funding for April – June Additional Maintenance

The proposal to hire a part-time assistant for the Superintendent was discussed. The position is intended to cover an average of approximately 5 hours per week during the season, at a cost of \$75-100/week. Members agreed that a need exists for performing numerous small-scale maintenance tasks that aren't covered by the contracted maintenance service, and have been neglected in recent years. It was believed that there was enough money in existing accounts to fund the relatively small expense for the remainder of FY21.

There was a question whether the Cemetery Department should be paying the Highway Department for labor if their employees were assisting with burial procedures during regular hours working.

Chair Grettum will speak with the Town Administrator to ask about arrangements for hiring a part-time assistant for the Superintendent, and also about the question regarding inter-departmental billing.

Superintendent Brown discussed the current options for grave excavations and closures, between the Highway Department, Sean Conway and Josh Harding. There was a preference to rely on the local contractors as a first resort, and reserve the Highway Department as emergency backup. Andy asked that the Commission to prioritize the list of providers. A motion was made to have the Superintendent contact the providers in the following order of priority: 1. Sean Conway; 2. Josh Harding; 3. Highway Department. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Fall Cemetery-Program Ideas

At the previous meeting, A. Holwell raised the idea of organizing activities to promote public awareness and appreciation for the town cemeteries and their historical nature. Today, Amy presented some more specific plans for contacting parties at Thomas Prince School to explore interest in developing programs for student educational visits.

Amy also referenced an upcoming event being held at a cemetery in Sterling, featuring grave rubbings, and planned to attend to garner ideas for possible events in Princeton.

Suggestions were made regarding partnering with existing groups (Scout Troops, various Clubs or Societies, etc.), local businesses or possible interest groups (Friends Of...) for assistance or contributions towards preserving and beautifying the town cemeteries. It was noted that some already contribute services, such as the Girl and Boy Scouts for Memorial Day.

G. Miranda will send Members a reference to MA state regulations regarding municipal acceptance of donations.

Project Discussion - continued

Chair Grettum has submitted a self-evaluation survey for the Cemetery Department as part of an ongoing town-wide accessibility review for ADA compliance. We are waiting for results from the review to see if there are any specific outcomes regarding cemetery access.

Items not anticipated by the Chair 48 hours before meeting

None.

April Agenda Items

Suggested items: Projects (cont'd), Cemetery Fees, Cemetery Management Software, and Meeting Schedule.

Schedule Next Meeting

Chair Grettum assigned the next meeting date to Monday April 12, 2021, to again be held remotely via GoToMeeting, at 7:00 PM. (The standard third Monday meeting date is again falling on a holiday, Patriots Day.)

P. Constantino motioned to adjourn, seconded by L. Trostel, passed unanimously.
Meeting adjourned at 8:28 P.M.

Submitted by Greg Miranda, Secretary
PCCminutes 3.18.2021