

Princeton Cemetery Commission Meeting – Monday April 12, 2021
Remote-Meeting via GoToMeeting

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

Absent: None

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

Review of Meeting Minutes from 3/15/2021

The minutes from the 3/15/2021 meeting were reviewed without changes, and approved by unanimous vote, 5-0.

A suggestion was made to segregate action items in a separate section of the minutes report for easier reference. The change will be implemented starting in this report.

Cemetery Superintendent Report (see Attached for details)

There were 6 full-body lots sold (4 in South, 2 in Woodlawn Main).

There have been no burials since last meeting. 3 burials (2 full-body, 1 cremation) are scheduled before the end of April, including a full burial on April 17.

The Superintendent reported that the contract maintenance company, Einstein Solutions, performed an excellent job with spring clean-up of the various cemetery grounds.

There has been one applicant for the part-time assistant job; the request for applicants has been reposted with an extension of application date to April 29, 2021.

The present candidate for the part-time position will be interviewed on April 23. Discussion ensued regarding the hiring process. Chair Grettum suggested authorizing a smaller group to interview the candidate, with the ability to make an immediate hiring decision rather than delaying the process to wait for approval by the full Commission at the next meeting. As the immediate supervisor of the future assistant, Superintendent Brown is integral to the process.

A motion was made by P. Constantino to authorize Chair Grettum and Superintendent Brown to interview the job candidate, and make a decision to immediately initiate the hiring process if they so approve. The motion was seconded by G. Miranda, and approved by unanimous vote, 5-0.

There are funds in the town tree removal fund which remain to be utilized before the end of FY20, that might be allowed for application towards cemetery projects. Superintendent Brown toured all of the town cemeteries with Tom Lyons from Clearview Tree, to survey problem trees and compose some price estimates for their removal. His list is included in the monthly report.

Removal of old flags from Veterans' markers has been proceeding thanks to the efforts of L. Grettum, including North, South and Woodlawn cemeteries.

A question was raised regarding the exact responsibilities of the various contractors or town employees involved with burial procedures. At the previous meeting, an order-of-call had been approved for the parties handling grave excavations (i.e., Conway Construction first, then Josh Harding, then Princeton Highway Department). In clarification, that only refers to the party who would provide the equipment and operator for the excavation itself. Under the current circumstances, the PHD would always be loaning the use of a 1-ton pickup truck to temporarily store the excavated dirt, and providing labor for refilling the grave afterwards. One of the anticipated duties of a new part-time assistant to the Cemetery Superintendent would be to provide the labor instead of the Highway Department in regards to transporting and relocating the dirt.

Administrative Changes

The official meeting date for the Cemetery Commission is the third Monday of every month. It has been observed that third Mondays coincide with various holidays more often than other Mondays, forcing a number of meetings to annually be moved to a different date than intended.

After discussion of the monthly meeting schedule, a motion was made by G. Miranda that the regular scheduled meetings of the Cemetery Commission be moved from the third Monday to the second Monday of every calendar month, with the change to take place for the first meeting of FY21, in July 2021. The motion was seconded by L. Trostel, and passed by unanimous vote, 5-0.

Fall Activity Update

An update was given by A. Holwell regarding her plans to attend a free “Cemetery Walk & Make Your Own Gravestone Rubbing Event” scheduled for May 8, 2021 at Chocksett Cemetery in Sterling, MA. It is hoped that some ideas may be generated for analogous events in Princeton.

Such events could potentially be used for fund raising if managed by an external beneficent group, like a “Friends of the Princeton Cemeteries” (see the “Gravestone Girls”, running the event in Sterling). It was also noted that at some time in the past, donations were raised in Princeton for funding of a lighted flagpole in one of the cemeteries by erecting a plaque with donors’ names at the site. Perhaps similar efforts could be applied towards flagpoles still in need of installation.

Action Item Status Review

Tractor-Trailer Truck across from South Cemetery –

Ownership of the truck is still in probate court, after previous owner passed away some years ago. A point was made about safety concerns besides the aesthetic issues. There do not appear to be any alternatives to waiting for the legal process.

Documentation of burial practices and procedures –

A final draft of the process description has been written by L. Grettum, with consultation by A. Brown. Copies to be distributed to other members. The document contains priority lists for order of responsibility in various duties:

- Burials: Primary – Cemetery Superintendent (A. Brown)
 First Backup – Bruce Rollins
 Second Backup – Cemetery Commission Chair (L. Grettum)
- Excavations: Primary – Sean Conway Construction
 First Backup – Josh Harding
 Second Backup – Princeton Highway Department
- Closures: Primary – Cemetery Department seasonal employee (after employee is hired)
 Backup – Princeton Highway Department
- Cremations: Primary – Cemetery Department seasonal employee (after employee is hired)
 Backup – Princeton Highway Department

Cemetery Management Software –

No progress from L. Grettum due to other priorities. G. Miranda continuing to survey software packages other than the three being investigated more closely by Lynne.

Outstanding Previous Action Items include:

- A. Brown – Updates to cemetery-related information on the town website.
P. Constantino – Query regarding repair of damaged guard rail adjacent to South Cemetery.
L. Grettum and A. Holwell – Contact with Princeton Historical Commission regarding joint projects and issues.
G. Miranda – Stair way construction at entrance to West Cemetery; waiting for results from town-wide accessibility survey.

Projects Review

Discussion was initiated by L. Grettum regarding the need for longer-range project planning versus getting bogged down in operational details. Ongoing evolution of the maintenance model (in-house vs. external contracting) and burial functions in recent years have led to greater direct involvement of the Commission. It was felt that we could step back and allow the Superintendent to handle more of the details, while focusing greater attention on larger issues. Lynne would like to see a 5-10 year plan developed, which would also help prioritize and justify future budget requests for desired projects. Members agreed with the goal.

Besides the needs involved with projects to make material repairs and improvements, there are longer term planning issues regarding possible expansion of cemetery grounds to create more gravesites, allotting space for green burials, and so on. This category of planning is hindered by the continuing lack of comprehensive records management, again pointing to the real need to implement some version of Cemetery Management Software.

A point was made relating to gravesite utilization in the future, that burial trends are changing and need to be taken into account in such planning. For example, cremations are becoming

more prevalent than full-burials, and a 'new' alternative burial method like green/natural burial requires new location considerations.

Regarding possible expansion, L. Grettum noted that there might be some larger regulatory issues which could prevent our utilization of Boylston Cemetery for additional burials. This situation is unclear at present.

A collection of references to green burial had been distributed to members via email by G. Miranda. Some additional information was found on the Massachusetts Department of Health website by L. Grettum, which points out the lack of any state laws specifically regulating green burials separately from existing practices. Lynne also looked up some regulations regarding green burial from a few towns engaging in the practice, and found a lot of variation as the details are left up to individual towns.

The Cemetery Department FY21 budget request included additional funds for delayed routine maintenance, but not for other projects. There is currently about \$4000 available in our accounts for improvements/repairs to cemetery grounds; that is the figure to take into consideration for current planning.

There was mention of previous assistance with some cemetery mapping obtained from CMRPC (Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission). L. Grettum will inquire about possible additional help.

Items not anticipated by the Chair 48 hours before meeting

None.

May Agenda Items

Chair Grettum intends the major focus of the next meeting to be a review of the pricing for cemetery lots and services.

Review of the Cemetery Rules and Regulations is also desired; potential regulation changes could be introduced concurrently with any pricing changes.

New Action Items

L. Grettum – Send copies of final drafts of document(s) describing the burial process, responsibilities and emergency escalation procedure to all members and Superintendent.

L. Grettum – Contact CMRPC regarding possible assistance with cemetery mapping. G. Miranda also interested in helping.

All Members – Review the recently distributed cemetery pricing information to facilitate discussion of potential changes to our price schedule at the next meeting. Also, consider previous budget and account information with regard to such areas as the amount going into perpetual care.

All Members – Review the Cemetery Rules and Regulations with an eye towards recommending edits, as necessary. Possible areas for consideration include regulations for lot sales, or limitations on memorial size, design and location.

L. Grettum – Implement change in meeting schedule with appropriate town official(s).

Schedule Next Meeting

Chair Grettum scheduled the next meeting for Monday May 17, 2021 at 7:00 PM, to again be held remotely via GoToMeeting.

P. Constantino motioned to adjourn, seconded by L. Trostel, passed unanimously, 5-0.
Meeting adjourned at 8:30 P.M.

Submitted by Greg Miranda, Secretary
PCCminutes 4.18.2021