

**Princeton Cemetery Commission Meeting – Monday May 17, 2021
Town Hall Annex - Large Meeting Room and GoToMeeting**

Present: Lynne Grettum, Lou Trostel, Greg Miranda, Paul Constantino, Andy Brown, Amy Holwell (attending remotely)

Absent: None

The meeting was called to order by Chair Grettum at 7:13 P.M.

Review of Meeting Minutes from April 12, 2021 and April 21, 2021

The minutes from the 4/12/2021 and 4/21/21 meetings were reviewed, and approved as written by unanimous vote, 5-0.

Cemetery Superintendent Report (see Attached for details)

There were one full body and one cremation burials.

There was one lot ownership transfer, North Cemetery.

Einstein Solutions did a great job with spring cleanup, has applied fertilizer and grub control in Woodlawn Cemetery, and is planning to start mowing this week.

A part-time laborer has been hired to assist the Superintendent. Zeb Sulmasy is scheduled to begin working the third week of May.

Superintendent Brown toured North, Meetinghouse and Woodlawn Cemeteries with town Tree Warden Tom Sullivan to discuss upcoming tree removal work, in preparation for the town-wide tree work to be put out for a combined bid. It was anticipated that all the work can be accomplished between this FY and the next.

The Superintendent and the Commission thank Doug Anderson for volunteer work being performed in Woodlawn Cemetery.

More bricks have fallen in where a hole is developing in one of the vault entrances in Meetinghouse Cemetery. Superintendent Brown has spoken with the Historical Commission about relocating their plastic storage containers inside the vault before repairs are started. A temporary cover will be put into place in the meantime.

The cemeteries should be in great condition for Memorial Day weekend. Current plans for the day are unknown; to be discussed at next Selectboard meeting. Superintendent Brown inquired about obtaining flowers for the planters at the entrance to Woodlawn Cemetery. Members L. Grettum and A. Holwell volunteered to put some plants in place prior to the holiday.

A suggestion was made to obtain a water storage container for communal use watering plants in Woodlawn cemetery, since the well usually dries up mid-summer.

Woodlawn Donation

The landscaping project in Woodlawn Cemetery gifted to the Town of Princeton by the Ollila family has been completed. A letter describing the project and officially gifting it to the town was sent to the Selectboard by Susan Ollila. A motion was made by L. Trostel to make final acceptance of the completed project by the Cemetery Commission, seconded by L. Grettum, and approved 5-0. The Commission also notes its sincere gratitude for the generous donation.

FY22 Cemetery Pricing

In the past year, changes have occurred in regards to the parties involved with gravesite preparations and burials. The excavation and refill had previously been performed by the maintenance contractor for several years, but that arrangement ended in June 2020 after a new maintenance company was hired. The current arrangement calls for the excavation to be performed by one of two private contractors, or the Princeton Highway Department as back-up. The refilling and reseeding should now be performed by the assistant to the Superintendent.

It is hoped that the current process will result in smooth operations going forward, but has also resulted in higher expenses. Last summer while a new process was being developed, the Department had to make emergency arrangements which resulted in burial costs higher than the amount being charged. Even under the current circumstances, it appears that the expenses are very close to the fee charged. A review of actual costs versus fees was undertaken, to discuss whether current cemetery fees are sufficient to meet expenses.

For reference purposes, a survey of 'local' cemetery pricing had been performed by G. Miranda in September 2021. Although there were significant variations between towns, the Princeton fees were very close to the overall average. Members agreed that our own pricing should be determined by our specific circumstances, but it was useful to see that we were not out of line in relation to the other towns.

Full Burial

An accounting was given by Superintendent Brown of the various expenses for different portions of the process for full-burials, including excavation, dirt removal and temporary grave covering, grave closing and loaming and seeding, and repair of settling after a year. The total figure was approximately \$800. It was also noted that current pricing for grave excavation is very reasonable and could easily be higher if other arrangements became necessary.

The current fee for full-burial is \$700 Weekdays/\$800 Saturday. After discussion, Members agreed on keeping a differential for Saturday versus weekdays, and that the fees should be raised due to increased expenses. Besides covering current expenses, the fee should provide some excess to help replenish the Cemetery Revolving Account and a little cushion to prevent further increases for several years.

A motion was made by P. Constantino to set the fee for full-burial at \$900 Weekdays/\$1000 Saturday. The motion was seconded by G. Miranda, and passed by a vote of 5-0.

Cremation Burial

Cremation burials do not involve heavy equipment for excavation, but still require labor and materials estimated to total several hundred dollars. It was noted that at the current time, the fee charged includes the cost for a cremation vault. The vault expense is approximately \$100, and may or may not be required depending upon the type of cremation urn being used.

Members agreed to separate out the vault fee as an independent \$100 charge, if required, and to initiate a differential between weekday and Saturday burials comparable to the case for full burials.

A motion was made by G. Miranda to set the fee for cremation-burial at \$400 Weekday/\$500 Saturday, with an additional charge of \$100 to provide a vault. The motion was seconded by P. Constantino, and passed by a vote of 5-0.

Lot Sales

Members discussed the pricing of cemetery lots, currently set at \$400/cremation lot and \$600/full lot. It was agreed that the price for a full lot was too low compared to that of a cremation lot, and that both were due for an increase. A certain portion of the lot sales goes into the perpetual care fund; only the interest from that account is available for spending and amounts to only a fraction of actual maintenance costs. The remainder of the fee goes towards general maintenance and improvements. The town will be running short of burial lots at some point in the future; even if new lots are created on currently owned cemetery property, expensive site preparation will be required.

A motion was made by G. Miranda to set the lot pricing in Princeton cemeteries at \$500/cremation lot and \$800/full lot. The motion was seconded by L. Trostel and passed by a vote of 5-0.

In all cases, changes in the fee schedule must be approved by the Selectboard. Chair Grettum will request that the changes voted by the Cemetery Commission be submitted for approval at an upcoming Selectboard meeting, with the intention of instituting the changes in time for the start of FY22.

Items not anticipated by the Chair 48 hours before meeting

An update was provided by A. Holwell regarding the Sterling cemetery tour that she recently attended. Amy thought that it was an entertaining experience that could be applicable in Princeton, and plans to give a more detailed presentation at the next meeting.

Chair Grettum has started preparing a list of considerations for future long term planning efforts.

May Agenda Items

Chair Grettum intends to begin a review of the Cemetery Rules and Regulations at the June meeting.

New Action Items

L. Grettum – Request meeting agenda item for Selectboard to discuss changes in cemetery fees.

L. Grettum and A. Holwell – Obtain flowering plants for the planters at the entrance of Woodlawn Cemetery before Memorial Day.

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.

Schedule Next Meeting

Chair Grettum scheduled the next meeting for Monday June 21, 2021 at 7:00 PM, to be held in the town hall annex.

L. Trostel motioned to adjourn, seconded by P. Constantino, passed unanimously, 5-0. Meeting adjourned at 8:36 P.M.

Submitted by Greg Miranda, Secretary
PCCminutes 5.24.2021