

# Waterford Cemetery Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 10, 2024, @ 6:00 PM

## Davies Library

In Attendance: Jen D'Agostino, Deb Benoit, Mark Harpin, Ashley Whitehill, with Jim O'Malley on voice call who chose to refrain from voting due to poor audio quality. Members of the Historical Society Helen Pike, Warner Hodgdon and Kathy Hodgdon were also in attendance.

Jen D'Agostino called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

### Modifications to Agenda

- Remove the Executive Session

### Approval of Meeting Minutes

- Mark Harpin made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of the December 6, 2023 meeting. Ashley Whitehill seconded the motion. Motion passed by acclamation of members present.

### Investing (Discussion)

- Deb Benoit did some research and found that the Cemetery Committee has 4 accounts. One account has a balance of \$611, but \$600 needs to stay in the account and cannot be spent. Deb suggested that the \$600 could instead be put in a Certificate of Deposit (CD) to yield more interest. The second account is the Cemetery Perpetual Trust Fund, which is for Riverside use only. It currently has a little over \$14,40, but \$12,500 can never be spent. The third is the Airs Unknown Account which has a balance of \$835, with \$486.40 that can ever be spent. The final account is the Cemetery Maintenance Account with roughly \$8,700 in it, but Deb has not been able to learn much about it yet. She will continue investigating. She suggested asking the Selectboard to go out for RFPs to local banks or Wells Fargo etc. to see what they can offer. She is hoping these funds can generate enough income to pay for cemetery maintenance. She also suggested asking the Selectboard to review the investment policy because it hasn't been updated since 2025.
- Jen D'Agostino read through a packet the committee was given and questioned the section that says, "The law requires the town to spend at least \$500 a year on the upkeep of its cemeteries... The amount drawn from the treasury of the town for such purpose in any year should not exceed \$500." They will investigate further and discuss the issue at the next meeting.
- Deb Benoit volunteered to put the Cemetery Committee on the agenda to speak at the Feb Selectboard meeting to request they have the Treasurer's Office go out for RFPs. Mark

Harpin and Deb Benoit volunteered to represent the committee and speak during the meeting.

#### Policy Review (Discussion)

- Deb Benoit and Mark Harpin had discussed changing opening and closing dates. No decisions were made or actions taken. Jen D'Agostino voiced concerns about the statute regulating how many remains and cremains can be put in each plot. The plots are able to be willed, so she is concerned about what would happen if a will dictates more remains and cremains go to a plot than is allowed by the statute. She also expressed concerns about the statute that says spouses can request to be buried in the plot along with the individual for whom the plot is designated. She pointed out there could be problems when a person has multiple spouses over their lifetime.
- Mark Harpin asked about reducing the three grave lot rule to two, noting most cemeteries do not offer three. One plot can hold 4 cremains and one full coffin.
- The group will review the policies in question and add them to the agenda for next month.

#### Surveying Riverside Cemetery (Discussion)

- Mark Harpin and Deb Benoit went to the Riverside Cemetery and reported on what they learned. There is a part of the cemetery that has never been surveyed. Warner Hodgdon explained he and Bill Willis went down there a little while ago and laid out more lots, but it has not been finalized yet. They drew up a preliminary map to show where extensions could be made without the town having to purchase more land. The committee deliberated about how to best effectively utilize the land with additional plots and roads to keep the plots accessible. Warner confirms they will need to hire someone to survey the new plots which will need to be brought to the Selectboard. Deb suggested surveying the entire remainder of the cemetery if the town can afford it, considering prices will only continue to rise as time goes on. Warner confirmed Styles Cemetery does not need to be surveyed, but the Lower Waterford Cemetery does. There are concerns about where the lines are for three sides of the cemetery because a few maps show property lines in different places. The fence on the river line has fallen over and is now overgrown, and there are plots there that could cause problems when they need to be used. He believes it is a relatively time-sensitive issue. There are not very many lots available so there is little potential income from fixing up that cemetery, but the group reiterates that it is important nonetheless.
- Jen D'Agostino notes she read a regulation that says the town can take back plots if they were purchased more than 20 years ago and the owners never made contact. They will look into it further and add it to the agenda for next meeting.
- Jen D'Agostino will call Chad Whitehill, Town Manager of St. Johnsbury, to ask about the trees that have fallen at Style's Cemetery on the border. Deb Benoit and Mark Harpin

volunteered to ask the Selectboard about hiring a surveyor during the next Selectboard meeting.

#### Historical Society Future Plans (Discussion)

- Jen D'Agostino opened the floor to thoughts, suggestions, and feedback from the Historical Society about how things are going in the cemeteries. Helen Pike, Historical Society President, explained the Historical Society is conducting a two-pronged approach to deal with the cemetery on Daniels Farm Road. It is their third project with the Vermont Old Cemetery Association (VOCA) to restore a long-neglected cemetery. They offer free training and help with stone restoration, etc. Through their support and the work of various members of the historical society and citizens, they discovered it was the Carr family who donated the land and who was the first to be buried there. After this discovery, they went through all of the necessary steps to have the town vote on Town Meeting to officially name it the Carr Cemetery. After the conclusion of renaming the cemetery on Daniel's Farm Road, the historical society will focus on correcting a mistake of who the Hill Cemetery is named after. They are not looking to rename the cemetery, so it will not require the town to vote.
- Warner Hodgdon noted that Totally Trees is contracted to work on various cemeteries to conduct big maintenance issues such as cutting and removing trees, etc. The quote for the cost of all cemeteries is \$15,560, which is fully funded through ARPA funds and a VOCA grant, so there will be no cost to the taxpayers. Some of the total has already been paid.
- VOCA is set to come to Daniels Farm Road cemetery on June 22, 9am-12pm to aid in restoration. The historical society will provide snacks and water for all volunteers.
- Jen D'Agostino asked about the status of the group. Deb Benoit and Warner Hodgdon confirmed they are a committee for the first year, after which time they will have the opportunity to be elected as members of a commission.

#### Agenda Items for Next Meeting 02/21/2024

- Policy Review
- No Activity/Contact Lots
- Report on Investing and Surveying Request to Selectboard

#### Adjourn

- The meeting was adjourned at 7:07 PM.