

Waterford Cemetery Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, July 16, 2024 @ 6:00 PM

Davies Library

In Attendance: Jen D'Agostino, Deb Benoit, Mark Harpin, Ashley Whitehill

Jen D'Agostino called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.

Modifications to Agenda

- Add Statement by Jen D'Agostino

Statement by Jen D'Agostino (Discussion)

- Cemetery Committee Chair Jen D'Agostino commented during a Selectboard meeting about the Cemetery Committee being disbanded that was referenced in the Caledonian Record. She clarified that she commented not as the Chair representing the Cemetery Committee, but as a private citizen of the town. She believes the work they do is important and does not take it lightly.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

- Deb Benoit made a motion to approve the meeting minutes as amended of the May 14, 2024 meeting. Mark Harpin seconded the motion. Motion passed by acclamation of members present.
- Ashley Whitehill made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of the June 13, 2024 meeting. Deb Benoit seconded the motion. Motion passed by acclamation of members present.

Budget (Discussion)

- Deb Benoit explained the Cemetery Committee budget needs to be prepared soon. The Town Treasurer's Office begins building the yearly budget in September, the Selectboard reviews it in November, and it is sent to print in the beginning of January. There is no information on State or Federal assistance with flood recovery, so that will affect the money available for the Cemetery Committee budget.
- Jen D'Agostino encouraged all folks who incurred damages from the July flooding to report it to Vermont 211 to help meet the qualifications for receiving FEMA money.
- Deb Benoit reported the progress of Dave from Totally Trees. He was scheduled to finish West Waterford Cemetery today. He had originally quoted 3 days of work at West Waterford Cemetery, but found it needed an additional day, so he will spend one less day at Lower Waterford Cemetery to maintain the same cost as planned. He will focus on the

line that faces the river during the two days he works at Lower Waterford Cemetery. Lower Waterford Cemetery will remain a priority because it is still accepting burials.

- Jen D'agostino asked if anyone could volunteer to get some of the work done, but the insurance liability does not allow that.
- The group deliberated on priorities to include in the budget. Clearing is still important, but they have to wait and see how much Dave accomplishes before deciding how much more work needs to be done. Fencing is a major priority. Hill Cem., Carr Cem., Stiles Cem., and potentially West Waterford Cem. all need new fencing. Mark Harpin suggested asking if VOCA can help, then working out a temporary solution in the meantime. Deb Benoit suggested making a 5-10 year plan detailing what needs to be done and what it will cost. Ashley Whitehill and Mark Harpin will find information about potential options and costs.
- Deb Benoit reminded the group that surveying still needs to be done. Jen D'Agostino plans to talk to Nate to get a quote for what it would cost to survey Riverside Cemetery so they can build a budget. Deb volunteered to meet with him and show him around. They decided to make a plan of which cemeteries to prioritize and move forward surveying each one after Riverside is completed.
- Jen D'Agostino and Ashley Whitehill volunteered to find out where the survey lines are in Lower Waterford Cemetery. There is a limited-release form the Jurentkuff landowner will need to sign to permit David and themselves to work in the Lower Waterford Cemetery.
- The group considered having a working meeting to compare maps. They will look into the paperwork and revisit the issue during the next meeting.
- All group members agreed that a paid sexton position is the best option. Deb Benoit volunteered to look into it and see how much previous sextons have been paid.
- The group considered increasing the number of mowings at certain locations. They looked into the current mowing plans and will revisit the topic in future meetings.

Policies (Discussion)

- Deb Benoit brought up the policy regarding green burials because she has been getting calls about it as the Town Clerk. She passed out a draft of possible edits to the current procedure. Members had significant concerns about the safety of green burials. They will revisit the issue next year and see how the situation develops. Jen D'Agostino will help Deb draft a letter to send to the family asking about a green burial.
- The group discussed a policy that states cornerstones must be installed within 60 days of lot purchase or when the headstone is placed or whichever comes first. Some corner markers are pins placed in the ground and are not visible. Mark Harpin thinks it's safer to require granite squares moving forward. He said they cost about \$300 for a set of four. Pins are difficult because they are only detectable with a metal detector, so they run a greater risk of being accidentally overlooked. The town does not currently own a metal

detector, so it is very difficult to maintain the perimeter of a lot with pins. A family is looking to install pins in a new lot. They also have another lot that goes back 50+ years with pins used as corner markers, so they didn't think there was a problem with it. The policy in question was added on September 21'. The committee is considering adding a definition to the term corner marker to ensure granite is used from now on. Deb Benoit and Jen D'Agostino will draft a letter to let the family to let them know they need visible corner markers.

Potential Sexton Roles and Responsibilities (Discussion)

- Deb Benoit will copy the roles and responsibilities listed on the old sheets used for previous sextons to discuss in the next meeting. The committee agrees that getting a sexton is important because if the committee were to dissolve, the consequences would fall to the Town Clerk even though the responsibilities do not belong to the Town Clerk.

Goals for Upcoming Year (Discussion)

- The committee would like to set up a five-year stone cleaning repair plan. They want to make a rotation so only one needs cleaning each year. The Historical Society has the materials required for cleaning, and the Cemetery Committee can organize volunteer teams. Jen D'Agostino wants to prioritize the two active cemeteries.
- Fencing will continue to be a goal for the upcoming year.
- Riverside Cemetery needs a lock for the driving gate.
- Deb Benoit joined the previous Historical Society Meeting where she learned they have plans to make signs for Hill and Carr Cemeteries. Jen D'Agostino had concerns if they planned to communicate this with the Cemetery Committee had Deb not been able to attend the meeting.
- The list of veteran graves is incomplete. Deb Benoit hopes to have the list completed by this fall and confirm with the Legion so the list is accurate by November. One site listed does not have a stone, and many have damaged or broken stones. The committee wants to look into this and see if the government can pay to replace them.
- The group will pursue adding the expense of military markers for veteran graves to the budget so families won't have to pay. Jen D'Agostino and Ashley Whitehill volunteered to go to the cemeteries when Deb's list is complete to locate each one. Mark Harpin added that not all veterans meet the criteria for receiving a military marker according to the Veteran's Administration. He recommended they look into it to make sure the rule is followed.

Items for Selectboard (Discussion)

- Nothing for the next meeting on July 22.

Agenda Items for Next Meeting - Aug 6 at 6pm

- Budget Discussion
- Sexton Action/Discussion
- 5-Year Plan Discussion
- Items for Selectboard Discussion
- Map Comparison Discussion

Adjourn

- Deb Benoit motioned to adjourn. Mark Harpin seconded the motion. Motion passed by acclamation of members present. Meeting adjourned at 7:23pm.

DRAFT