



## Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes

**Meeting Date:** Thursday, September 20, 2018, 4:30 pm

**Commissioners Present:** Rita Church, Lainey Rappaport, Francis (Tag) Taginski

**Commissioners Missing:** Emma Swift, Mellisa Cain

**Staff Present:** Holli Bushnell - Office Assistant, Deryk Roach – Parks Superintendent

**Public Present:** Shimmy Cohen – Funeral Director for Boucher and Pritchard

**Attachments:** Mayor Weinberger Letter, South End Cemetery Letter to P&Z

Mtg. was called to order at 4:28pm by Taginski

### I. Approval of Agenda

Rappaport moved to approve the agenda, Church seconded.

At this time Taginski took a moment to apologize for the confusion concerning the date of the meeting. As he is new in his leadership role, he characterized the mix-up as growing pains. He hopes for better communication and clarity in the future.

### II. Approval of Minutes from July 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting

Rappaport moved to approve the minutes, Church seconded.

Before old business was discussed, Taginski asked that the Burial Trends presentation by Shimmy Cohen of Boucher & Pritchard Funeral Home be moved forward in consideration of Shimmy's time. All were in agreement.

Cohen proceeded to describe the current state of the funeral industry, paying particular attention to the cost of various services and balance between requirements of different faiths and municipalities. When asked about green burial, as there is growing interest in that option, Cohen pointed out that burial in local Jewish cemeteries is the closest option to green burial available in the area as they do not embalm and use vented vaults to aid in rapid decomposition. He also pointed out that one of the many issues with green burial is the fact that, without embalming or vaults, gravesites can collapse. The ideal soil composition for green burial is a sandy soil with rocks placed on top as this minimizes the possibility of collapse. These are some of the many things the commission will need to consider as they continue to pursue the possibility of green burial in Burlington. Cohen concluded his presentation with a comment that he would appreciate it if the cemetery office was able to respond to his questions in a timelier manner. Unfortunately, as there is not someone in the office full time, this will be a difficult request to satisfy.



### III. Old Business

#### A. Lakeview fence repair/replacement and Section 6 update

There is no update on either the fence replacement or the surveying of section 6. Shimmy Cohen recommended that the city contact Steve Roberge who constructed a fence at one of his cemeteries. The commission will pass the information along to Cindi Wight. Taginski suggested that the commission move to allocate \$25,000 of the funds currently set aside for the fence repair towards laying out section 6. The quorum of commissioners agreed to this suggestion.

#### B. Lakeview office building repair

Deryk Roach reports that the repairs of the Lakeview office will be on the agenda at the next Capital meeting. They hope to provide enough funds to entice contractors to take on the project.

#### C. Commission letter to City Council/Mayor Weinberger

Taginski presented a draft copy of a letter to Mayor Weinberger. This letter will ultimately go to the city council but will go to the mayor first at his request. The letter serves as a reintroduction of sorts for the cemetery commission. The hope is that in the future the city council will be more aware of the issues facing the cemetery commission and the city cemeteries as a whole, and that they will be considered for more/better funding going forward. Both Church and Rappaport commended Taginski on the letter. They agreed that the content of the letter was accurate and all commissioners moved for the draft to be finalized and sent to Mayor Weinberger. A copy of the letter will also be sent to Wight and City Council President Kurt Wright.

#### D. WWI Book Acquisition/celebration approval

Bushnell reports that the WWI Book, Vermont in the World War 1917-1919 has arrived and is available for reading and research in the Lakeview office.

On the subject of setting aside October 20<sup>th</sup> for Friends of Lakeview open chapel and WWI tour event, all commissioners agreed that burials would not be appropriate that day. They suggested that the Lakeview staff close to burials for the day to ensure a positive tour experience to all planning to attend. In order to make the plan official, Taginski suggested a motion be made to close the cemetery to burials on the day of the event. Church moved the motion, Rappaport seconded.

#### E. Planning/Zoning Letter re: New Cemetery

Taginski informed the commission members that a letter had been sent to Meagan Tuttle at Planning and Zoning in regards to seeking funding to develop sections 6 and 8. Additionally, the letter requested that plans for a new cemetery be added to Plan BTV. The letter was



sent roughly one month ago. If a response is not received in the next couple of weeks Taginski will contact P&Z.

#### **F. Perpetual Care Fund**

Bushnell reported that she met with Rich Goodwin and Darlene Bayko at the clerk's office in regards to the investment of the perpetual care fund. She reported that, with the current investment policy, the city is only allowed to purchase a \$250,000 CDs with minimal interest rates. The hope is that, as the new investment policy is approved, the city will be able to make better investments that provide greater yield. Currently, the money from bonds for perpetual care are preserved in CDs and the interest is transferred yearly and is used as part of the operating budget. Tagniski and Rappaport were both interested to know exactly what the percentage of interest available is. Taginski wants to insure the liquidity of the funds in the future. He also asked when the withdrawals are made and what precisely the care budget is. Bushnell was unsure and will forward questions to Bayko and Goodwin.

### **IV. New Business**

#### **A. Joint Parks/Cemetery Commission Meeting**

Taginski informed the commission that, upon attending the Parks Commission meeting he discovered that they know little to nothing about the activities of the Cemetery Commission. He conferred with Bushnell and asked her to put together an informational packet concerning the 3 city cemeteries and the various goals of the commission.

The Parks commission would like to hold a joint meeting with the Cemetery Commission. This may be difficult to schedule. Tagniski suggested that the Cemetery Commissioners meet at least one more time before the joint meeting. He also pointed out that, considering the time of year and the lack of accessibility to the Lakeview office we may want to even wait until spring. The idea is to give the Parks Commissioners a tour of Lakeview and then meet to discuss common issues. Taginski will reach out to Wight to come up with an agenda. Taginski suggested we provide information as soon as possible and then give the Parks Commission an opportunity to digest the information to provide. Church thought this was a positive idea and wants to move forward slowly so that we're completely organized before we involve others. Rappaport also thought this was a positive idea.

The commission will discuss this again at the next meeting.

#### **B. Endowment Fund/Capital Campaign**

Taginski explained that, with several large projects in the works he would like to attempt a fundraising campaign, possibly in conjunction with the Friends of Lakeview. He has been informed that there are other issues that are currently taking precedence above that of the cemeteries. After discussing the possibility of fundraising with the vice chair of the parks



commission Taginski would like to focus on one project for which the commission could raise funds. He suggested that we discuss this further at the next meeting. He proposed that the commission possibly combine the incoming funds with those of the Friends of Lakeview.

Church pointed out that some of the funds available to the Friends have been allocated to specific projects and that that may be an issue in working in conjunction with one another. Taginski felt that this would not be an issue as the campaign concerns new funds and would not touch older contributions. He would like to split money between the friends and the cemetery endowment. He would also like to employ a grant writer and seek out funding as an historical site and matching funds from various other sources.

Church asked if Taginski would be willing to come to a future Friends meeting to explain the possible joint effort. Taginski agreed to do so after he receives feedback on the letter to the Mayor. He does not have a timeline for this effort yet, but would love to meet with the Friends. Church and Bushnell concluded that the best meeting for Taginski to attend is in November. He will be informed as soon as the meeting is scheduled.

### **C. Long Range Plan Discussion**

Taginski asked that this item be tabled until the next meeting when, hopefully, all commissioners will be present.

### **V. Superintendent and Office Assistant Report**

Bushnell reported on the general goings on at the cemetery. She made note of one particular issue regarding the ownership of multigenerational lots. A couple came into her office about a month after someone was buried in their family lot. According to them this individual did not have the right to be buried there and they expressed their distress at seeing his marker in their lot due to bad blood between their side of the family and his. Bushnell has since met with the Wight and City Attorney Justin St James to determine the best course of action. After parsing the details of the original deed it was determined that the individual who was buried did indeed have rights to be placed in the lot. It has since been suggested to the family that they take this matter to probate court.

Bushnell also requested that, as she splits her time between two locations, commissioners only stop by the office in case of emergency. In the future all meetings will be scheduled in advance and most communication will be done via email.

### **VI. Parks Director Items**

All Parks Director items were discussed in old business.



## **VII. Commissioner Items**

Rappaport asked that Roach look into when signage will be posted at the cemeteries. He will do so. She also mentioned that tree work needs to be done at Greenmount and that there are branches down at Elmwood. Roach agreed to contact the tree crew and make sure the work is completed before winter.

Tagniski stated that, in the future, all issues concerning the cemetery be directed either to Bushnell or, if she is unable to handle them, be added to the next meeting agenda. This should not only improve communication but also streamline the process and hopefully allow repairs and other work to be completed in a timelier manner.

Rappaport mentioned that Thea Lewis, local historian, is planning to hold another ghost walk at Lakeview around Halloween. The event was advertised in Seven Days, but Bushnell was completely unaware that this event is happening. Church informed the commission that Lewis has been in touch with the Friends. Bushnell will ask Friends to make sure individuals who contact them hoping to hold an event also contact her.

Commission members expressed frustration at the continued issues with the city email system. They requested that Bushnell contact IT to inform them that the commission is still struggling with the email. She will do so.

Church confirmed that the commission agrees to request the cemetery office to hold the 20<sup>th</sup> of October for their WWI event. She requested that the portable ramp be installed before the event on the 20<sup>th</sup>. She asked if Bushnell would print 200 copies of the tour map for the event (which Bushnell was happy to do). Finally, she asked that Bushnell contact the American Legion to ensure that honor guard will be present for event.

Taginski took a moment to point out that today, the 20<sup>th</sup>, is Holli Bushnell's birthday. He asked that it be duly noted in the minutes. Bushnell and the commission happily enjoyed the cupcakes his wife baked.

## **VIII. Public Comments**

No public comments were made at this time.

## **IX. Adjournment**

Bushnell reported that Swift had provided her with a list of dates she has available for the next meeting. Of those dates, the group decided to meet on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 4:30pm at the Lakeview Cemetery office.

Rappaport motioned to adjourn, Church seconded.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:10pm.