

Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: November 17, 2016, 4:30 pm

Commissioners Present: Rita Church, Allison Curran, Lainey Rappaport, Donna Waldron

Staff Present: Jesse Bridges, Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Director
Anne D’Alton, Cemetery Office Assistant
Gregg Meyer, Assistant City Attorney

Attachments: Jeff Shedd’s Job Duties
Copy of 11.09.16 email from Liisa Reimann Rivera of Preservation Burlington
National Parks Service Bulletin: *48 Preservation Briefs: Preserving Grave Markers in Historic Cemeteries*, from Devin A. Colman, State Architectural Historian
Office Reports (*updated after meeting with adjusted averages*):
FY16 Annual Report
FY17 Cumulative Totals through October, 2016
Vermont Cemetery Association Meeting Minutes, 10.14.15 and 06.15.16
New England Cemetery Association Meeting Invitation (to view)
Vermont Old Cemetery Association Grant Proposal Form

Mtg. was started at 4:35 by Chair Donna Waldron.

I. Approval of Agenda

- A. Moved Gregg Meyer discussion from III.C. to III.A.
- B. Lainey Rappaport moved to approve the Agenda; Rita Church seconded; all approved.

II. Approval of Minutes from August 11, 2016 Meeting (addressed after IIIA.)

- A. Rappaport asked for hard copy to review, then moved to approve; Allison Curran seconded; all approved.

III. Old Business

- A. **Feedback from Gregg Meyer on the legal perspective of determining Burlington Resident status, as it pertains to lot purchase.**
 - 1. Meyer apologized for delay in addressing this request, which was made after the Commissioners were unable to reach a decision about possibly changing the Burlington Cemetery rule at 10.07.2015 Cemetery Commission meeting.
 - 2. The below summary indicates that the importance of and methods for determining price differentials for town residents & non-residents used by local Cemeteries, including City of Burlington, vary (information compiled and presented at 10.07.15 Cemetery Commission meeting). The legal concern is that all purchasers are treated equally, within the parameters decided on by the Commission, so the Commission should propose what they want to do, and Meyer will review it



SUMMARY:

Of the 22 towns asked, 20 responded-- 10 discriminate between residents & non-residents.

Of these 10, 4 require that lot owner is or was a resident.

Of these 10, resident status is based on:

--for 6: the lot purchaser's residence, but lot purchaser is considered a resident if they lived in or have family in town.

--for 1: if the purchaser pays property or business taxes.

--for 1: person to be interred.

--for 1: the issue is currently under discussion.

--for 1: the issue has not come up, but they think it would be based on the residency of the person to be interred.

3. Rappaport described the apparent unfairness of charging the non-resident price to a long-time Burlington resident who moved out of town late in life, or to a family from out-of-town buying a lot for a deceased resident.
4. Allison Curran expressed concern that any new determination of resident status could result in legal issues.
5. Jesse Bridges noted one solution not yet discussed was to have a single price for both residents & non-residents. This would be between the resident & non-resident price, thus making it higher than most Chittenden County Cemeteries, but perhaps that will be acceptable due to the value added by the beautiful location and expert care. He will review the budget, market values, and added values and propose a new, single price. Perhaps this could help offset the deficit in revenue vs expenses incurred by the Cemetery Division. Meyer noted that no City Dept. is obligated to operate at a deficit, as the Cemetery Division does—that this is an understandable and legal reason to increase fees.
6. Rappaport asked if a change would need to be made at the change of the fiscal year. Bridges replied that after a price change is approved, it can be implemented at any time that allows appropriate time for communication to the public.
7. Church asked if lot owners are allowed to resell; D'Alton responded yes, but they usually sell back to the Cemetery, which is easier than finding a buyer on their own.

B. Commissioners' support for making D'Alton's position full-time.

1. Rappaport expressed her support for this, noting that she felt it would be easier to replace D'Alton's position at the Library than at the Cemetery.
2. Waldron values D'Alton's sharing her 8 years of experience and understanding about the City of Burlington Cemeteries with the Commission.
3. Bridges reported that D'Alton has expressed her desire to work full-time to him and the Mayor, too. The City is reviewing Administrative staffing, with a focus on customer service, with the understanding that all interactions reflect on the City as a whole.
4. Bridges is working on the FY18 budget and will share it with the Cemetery Commission. The fact that the Department generates revenue is beneficial for adding hours to the Cemetery Office position.
5. Church noted that as the City grows, more people are visiting the Cemeteries, which requires more customer service.
6. Bridges reiterated the point the D'Alton has made: outside of her scheduled hours, maintenance crew is taken away from their work to do customer service, which they are good at, but increasing her hours would enable them more time to devote to their jobs.
7. Rappaport asked if grant money could be used; Bridges replied no, not for salaries, but with more time, D'Alton may be able to pursue grant funding for projects, which may benefit the Parks Department as a whole. However, grants can restrict scope of duties.



Having sources of funding besides the General Fund could make the full-time proposal more attractive to the City Council, so it would be helpful if the Cemetery Commission sought grant funding, too.

C. Report from Barry Trutor on repair of markers in Greenmount.

1. Waldon received an email from Trutor indication that he had not had time to do this work, as he had taken on more responsibilities for the Vermont Old Cemetery Association. He hoped to pick up the project again in the Spring.
2. Church commended Trutor's intentions, but it is looking like he is too busy to follow through, so the Commission may look into picking up this project.

IV. New Business

A. Report from Jeff Shedd

1. Waldron asked Shedd to write up a list of his job duties to better inform the Commission of what it takes to keep the three City of Burlington Cemeteries so well-cared-for. Shedd responded with a 4-page handwritten document, to be copied for Commission at next meeting. Waldron gave the Commission a brief overview:
 - ◆ Grounds & building maintenance, supervision, snow plowing, shoveling and sanding, garbage removal, grave digging, burials, selling lots, establishing new areas for lots, determining price for lot re-purchase, helping with genealogy research, responding to complaints, helping families plan burials, communicating with the public, funeral homes, monument dealers, other City Departments.
2. Waldron invited Commission to express their appreciation to Shedd.

B. Letter from Liisa Reimann Rivera of Preservation Burlington

1. Waldron asked D'Alton if she felt Rivera's criticism of the cleaning work performed by Jim Woodman was warranted; D'Alton replied she did not have any knowledge of the specific practices involved in stone cleaning and repair, but that Woodman had been in the business for many years, and she trusted his judgement and expertise.
2. Bridges asked if Woodman obtained permission for cleaning & repairing markers in Home for Destitute Children area; D'Alton said she's sure he must have discussed it with Shedd.
3. Waldron suggested that a good response would be to invite Preservation Burlington to give a presentation in the Chapel on stone repair and cleaning—this would serve several purposes: build collaborative relationship with PB, education, possible attraction of volunteers to help with the work needed at Greenmount. It could be advertised on the Parks web site, Front Porch Forum, various community calendars.

V. Superintendent's Items

- A. The Bond that passed for infrastructure support will allow the City to catch up with deferred capital repairs at Lakeview:
 1. Retaining wall collapse will be repaired by replacing the wall with a slope.
 2. Front fence is a high priority
- B. Penny-for-Parks money used to repair slope & fence (with a gate) along Bike Path at west side of Lakeview Cemetery.
- C. Report on progress of the development at the south boundary of Lakeview:
 1. Originally a 30' set-back was agreed on. Then a 200'-long strip of 30' south of the Lakeview boundary was purchased. A proposal to purchase the 30' strip up to North



Avenue is being considered. This would protect this land as a buffer, to be managed by the City instead of the developers.

VI. Commissioner's Items

A. Update by Church and Curran on using Chapel for musical events

1. Curran contacted a few musicians, needs to follow up.
2. Church will contact St. Paul's Episcopal, but the contact person there has been ill.
3. Curran feels the timeframe needs to be pushed out toward Spring.

B. Thea Lewis conversation

1. Waldron reported that Thea Lewis wants to collaborate on an event.

C. Greenmount visit (postponed)

D. Grant application from VOCA regarding statuary restoration

1. Waldron contacted VOCA and obtained a grant proposal form: for every \$2 spent, they will give \$1, up to \$750. The Commission currently has \$139 in donations available.

VII. Office Report

- A. D'Alton reported that Thea Lewis donated \$100 (via the Vermont Lake Monsters) for using Lakeview Cemetery as one of her Ghostwalk venues. Waldron had told Lewis that the Commission plans to do marker repair, and Lewis wanted to support this effort, so she made her donation to the Cemetery instead of the Friends of Lakeview Cemetery.
- B. D'Alton shared copies of the minutes from the two most recent Vermont Cemetery Association Meetings, so that Commissioners would learn what other Vermont cemetery managers & board members are discussing. The meetings are held once or twice a year, at different places in Vermont. D'Alton has attended several, but has not had time over the past couple of years. Commissioners are welcome. D'Alton shared the agenda for the upcoming New England Cemetery Association, meeting, too. She has never attended the meetings of this organization, because it is much more expensive, takes place out of state and over several days, and usually includes many presentation topics not of interest. The City Cemetery Division is a member of both these organizations.
- C. D'Alton shared final FY16 statistics, noting that it had taken longer than usual to compile these because it was during FY16 that the Perpetual Care Fund was reinvested to get a better return, and money was shifted to various accounts, making final accounting confusing until she learned from Jason Gow at the Clerk's Office what had transpired and how to interpret the New World reports. In the past, statistics were compared to the prior year's. This year, D'Alton calculated the averages from the last five years in addition, to present a more realistic analysis of any trends. First Quarter FY17 statistics were reported, too.

VIII. Public Comment - none (*no public in attendance*)

IX. Adjournment

- A. The meeting adjourned at 6:15.

Next meeting: Thursday, January 26, 2017, 4:30 pm at the Cemetery Office.