

Minutes of 9/20/2023 Cemetery Commission
6:00 PM
Hybrid Meeting with Zoom
(Under Emergency Order for Pandemic)
Minutes Approved at the Meeting of October 18

Members present: Walter Tibbetts (WT), Dina Stander (DS), Susan Millinger (SM). The Meeting was called to order at 6:17.

- 1) Minutes of the August 16, 2023 meeting. *Motion to approve these minutes was made, seconded and the motion was unanimously passed by a roll call vote.* The task list the secretary sent out soon after the August meeting was considered helpful
- 2) New burials and lot sales
 - a. The burial of Charles Read in the Locks Pond Road cemetery
- 3) Hiring of new Groundskeepers:
 - a. Status of Groundskeeper Linus Mearian. He also is retiring.
 - b. The Job Description:
 1. The Personnel Committee about has not yet responded to WT about updating the job description.
 2. WT revised the old job description and showed it to DS and SM. His additions are intended to better indicate what tasks the groundskeepers have indeed been doing and clarify some elements in the older description which were too general. WT pointed out that the old description referred to the DPW Superintendent as a second supervisor of the groundskeepers.
 3. *A motion to approve the additions and corrections WT made was made, seconded, and approved by a roll call vote.*
 4. WT will contact Personnel Committee to try to get the revised job description on its agenda and approved.
 - c. The Advertisement needs to be written up.
 - d. Changing to a professional company?
 1. WT contacted Grassroots of Leverett to see if they would be interested in taking over care of our cemetery grounds. They don't

have enough staff to do this. We also wondered whether we could afford to have a professional company do this work.

2. WT will look for at least one other company and find out their price.

e. Raising the pay of groundskeepers discussed. Currently it is \$17/hour. Should it be raised to \$20/hour to make the job more attractive? WT is asked to talk with the Town Administrator and the Finance Committee.

1. If it is possible, the increase should be offered to our current groundskeepers to see if it would make the job attractive enough for them to stay on.

4) Allowing a Member of the Commission work as a paid groundskeeper

1. The members would like to see WT get permission to work as a paid groundskeeper since he is currently doing unpaid groundskeeping work.

2. WT is to see what next steps are necessary in the procedure to get onto the Warrant for Annual Town Meeting a request for WT to be allowed to serve in the position as Groundskeeper as well as a member of the Cemetery Commission, which supervises the position.

5) The Community Preservation Committee's contract and gravestone repair project updates.

a. The contract was signed by the Select Board.

b. WT contacted TaMara Conde. She will look at her schedule, but thinks she may not be able to get to the work until the spring.

\6.) Update on ground-penetrating radar: DS had contacted Bob Perry of Topographix

5.

6. Other unfinished business:

a. DS will draft regulations about interment of cremations.

b. DS will draft information about family-directed burials.

c. We agreed that a to-do list would be helpful for family/friend-directed burials and also for those planning to use a funeral director. No one took on these tasks, unless DS's planned draft for family-directed burials would meet the first need.

d. SM found a better copy of the General Regulations for Burials with the statement about vaults being optional in traditional burials and not permitted in natural/green burials. She is attaching that version. It includes:

1. the recent addition about checking with the Cemetery Commission chair before erecting a gravestone or marker (in the new Section 4)
2. a draft note encouraging people to come to a CemCom meeting to ask their questions (in Section 2 of the Regulations)
3. a rearrangement of the order of the sections, so that gravestone and decoration business is the final section
4. an added phrase that the regulations for a cement or stone base for a gravestone applies to traditional burials (in the new Section 4)
5. Please take a look and see what you think. Changes 1, 2 and 4 are highlighted in aqua. The revisions need to be approved.

7. Date and time for the Next Meeting: Sept 20 at 6 p.m.

8. Adjournment: *A motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and unanimously approved in a roll call vote.* The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Submitted by
Susan Millinger,
Cemetery Commission secretary

Attachment:

Regulations for Shutesbury Cemeteries

Section One: General Regulations: Conduct of Persons within Cemeteries
Cemetery access is permitted between one hour before sunrise and one hour after sunset.

Please be respectful of the resting places of family, friends and neighbors.

Alcoholic beverages, camping, and fires are prohibited.

You are welcome to walk your dogs here, but be sure to clean up after them.

Do not pick flowers, either wild or cultivated; do not break or cut trees, shrubbery or plants.

Do not deface or otherwise damage gravestones, monuments, markers, gravesites, or other structures.

Gravestone rubbings are prohibited unless permitted in writing by the Lot owner or by the Cemetery Commission if no Lot owner can be found.

Neither the Shutesbury Cemetery Commission nor the Town of Shutesbury is to be held liable for theft, vandalism and/or destruction of property on any Town Cemetery.

Section Two: Purchase of Cemetery Lots

Note: The Cemetery Commission asks those who have questions and concerns about burials, gravestones, etc., to come to our regular monthly public meetings so we can answer their questions in as a timely a way as we can, and ask our own questions to get clarity about their needs and desires. Consult the Town Meetings Calendar for information about the next scheduled meeting and link. Please contact the Chair to be put on the agenda.

Part A: Purchase

For further information regarding purchasing lots, burials, and their requirements, (including the Natural Burial Section), please visit the Cemetery Commission section of the Town website www.shutesbury.org

The purchase of cemetery lots is limited to those individuals with personal connections to Shutesbury. New sales to Non-Residents are available only to people who have previously resided in town, or have family members resident in town, or are descended from people who were residents, or at the discretion of the Cemetery Commission.

Persons who wish to purchase lots must contact the Chair of the Cemetery Commission or another member of the Commission if the Chair is not available.

Part B: Transfer and Repurchase of Lots

The Town of Shutesbury reserves the sole and exclusive authority over the use and/or exchange of lots. Any change in ownership or transfer of rights may be made only through the Shutesbury Cemetery Commission.

The Shutesbury Cemetery Commission may, at its discretion, allow the transfer of ownership of cemetery lots from one person to another.

The Shutesbury Cemetery Commission may, at its discretion, agree to repurchase a lot or lots from the lot owner, their heirs, or the lot owner's estate. The amount paid for the repurchase of a lot will be the original amount paid for the lot, but not less than \$100.00/lot.

Section Three: Burials

Burial arrangements are normally made with a funeral director who communicates with the Chair of the Cemetery Commission. However, it is possible for funerals to be directed by family members or the executor(s) of the deceased, as long as all regulations are followed. Consult the website for the Cemetery Commission's Guidelines for a Family-Directed Funeral.

Whoever is directing a funeral is required to inform the Chair of the Cemetery Commission of burial date, time, cemetery in which burial is to take place, a lot#, and name of owner of lot prior to any commitment to the deceased's family.

The burial of cremated remains must be arranged with the Chair of the Cemetery Commission.

Burials are not required to be in a vault in any part of any of Shutesbury's Cemeteries, but they are not prohibited in any section except the natural (green) burial area of West Cemetery.

Section Four: Grave Decorations and Graves:

The owner of a plot shall have the right to erect a gravestone, marker or monument commemorative of the dead. However, no private individual shall install a gravestone or marker until a member of the Cemetery Commission has marked the proper location for the stone. Anyone not following this regulation will be charged a fine of \$100.

(Definitions: A gravestone is upright; a monument is a more elaborate structure like an obelisk or a statue; a marker is set in the ground. The top of a marker must be even with the soil line and its dimensions not more than 2 feet by 1 foot.)

All gravestones and monuments for traditional burials must rest on a foundation of cement and stone, and shall reach a depth below the customary frost line and be built to professional standards. A natural stone used as a gravestone need not rest on a foundation as long as the stone is not subject to falling over.

Statues, fences, curbing, effigies, or other structures that may interfere with maintenance are prohibited. Small items left in remembrance are not prohibited as long as they are placed on the stone so that they don't interfere with maintenance.

Placing of flags must be approved by the Chair or in his absence another member of the Shutesbury Cemetery Commission.

Planting of any trees, shrubs or ornamentals without permission from the Cemetery Commission is prohibited. Annual or perennial flowers may be planted in front of the gravestone or monument. The Commission has the authority to trim or remove any plantings as deemed necessary.

Cemetery staff have the right to remove all flowers, containers & decorations on any burial site when they deem necessary.

Approved by the Shutesbury Cemetery Commission 12/15/21; revision
approved 9/20/23