Town of Concord
Cemetery Committee Meeting
March 6, 2019
135 Keyes Road

Members Present:  Mr. Paul Cooke -- Chairperson
                 Ms. Whitney Kecher-Nguyen -- Vice-chairperson
                 Ms. Carol Harney
                 Ms. Andrea Solomon

Also Present:     Mr. Daniel Rowley – Highway & Grounds Superintendent
                 Ms. Patricia Hopkins – Cemetery Supervisor
                 Ms. Kimberly Connors
                 Mr. Jerry Soucy
                 Mr. Rick Freese, Ms. Nancy Reilly, and Ms. Priscilla Sturges from The
                 Friends of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

A-1  Thirteen deeds were submitted for signature.

A-2  The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m.

A-3  Announce that the meeting is being audio recorded

A-4  Review of Agenda (Additions can only be made if not anticipated by the chair at least 48
     hours in advance and the item cannot wait until a future meeting)

A-5  The minutes of meeting on December 12, 2018, and January 2, 2019, were approved

A-5  The next proposed committee meeting is April 3, 2019, at 7:00 p.m.

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

Mr. Paul Cooke suggested that The Friends of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery speak first, to which the
Cemetery Committee agreed.

D-8: THE FRIENDS OF SLEEPY HOLLOW CEMETERY:
Ms. Carol Harney reported that The Friends of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery are very interested in
sponsoring the signs for the Massachusetts native tree labeling project, as well as the new sign for
the Melvin Memorial. The Friends of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery are having their annual breakfast on
April 6, and Mr. David Wood from the Concord Museum will be speaking at the Colonial Inn about
Ralph Waldo Emerson. The Friends of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery are also interested in supporting
the new paving stones in front of the Melvin Memorial, and would like an estimate. The Fannins,
and other volunteers from The Friends of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, have cleaned gravestones in the
past, and would like to do it again, and have a proposal coming. Mr. Cooke thanked The Friends of
Sleepy Hollow Cemetery for their interest in sponsoring the sign, and forming a group with Ms.
Nancy Reilly, Ms. Priscilla Sturges, and Mr. Rick Freese, as well as Ms. Andrea Solomon from the Cemetery Committee, for developing the text. Former Cemetery Committee member, Ms. Kimberley Connors, has provided historical information as has Mr. Freese. Ms. Sturges has spoken with Crosby Design and has seen examples of interpretive signage which allows for a lot of text. Due to the likely location of the sign, there must be consideration of its placement and readability from a distance. Ms. Sturges needs the content as soon as possible so she can design the layout. Mr. Freese has an original dedication photo from 1909 that could be on the sign, which Ms. Connors thinks would be good to include. Mr. Daniel Rowley said the process of gifting the sign to the Town needs to be kept in mind and explained the process. Mr. Rowley hopes the sign can be accepted and installed before the June 16, 2019, rededication ceremony.

Regarding matters such as the Melvin Memorial pavers, the cemetery tree labeling project, other cemetery signage, and headstone cleaning, Mr. Cooke suggested we talk at another time. Ms. Sturges said they need more information on the pavers, which Mr. Cooke said we are working on. Mr. Rowley said Ms. Patricia Hopkins has a list of trees native to Massachusetts to cross reference with our list of cemetery trees; and he will get that list to Ms. Harney for the upcoming meeting of The Friends of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery. Mr. Cooke said the Cemetery Committee will need to approve the labels before they are ordered. Ms. Harney asked how many trees will actually get labels; it was decided we will label one of each, which will help The Friends of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery get estimates for the cost of the labels.

D-1: CHAIR COMMENTS:
Mr. Cooke thanked Mr. Rowley and Ms. Hopkins for keeping the roads clear during all of our winter storms. Mr. Cooke welcomed Mr. Jerry Soucy, who has applied to join the Cemetery Committee.

D-2: STAFF REPORT - MELVIN MEMORIAL SLATE DONATION, PATRIOTS DAY PARADE, TREE IDENTIFICATION AND PLANTING PROJECT:
Mr. Rowley said the upper half of the slates from the Melvin Memorial are still at the cemetery and he and Ms. Hopkins have met with Ms. Di Clymer from the Concord Free Public Library board, and they are still interested in them, but now they plan to use them under benches. Mr. Rowley wanted the Cemetery Committee to know this since it is not the original intent of the Committee. Ms. Solomon thinks asking the library to use them in a more respectful manner is how we should proceed, and if they cannot, then ask the family if they approve of the slates going under the benches. Mr. Cooke thinks the family should be contacted first, and then asked the Cemetery Committee if they have a problem with the idea of the bench placement. Mr. Cooke said the slates are not in great shape, and wonders what other ways could the library use them. It was asked whether the historic nature of the slates matters to their future use. Ms. Hopkins said that one of the three relatives was not that enthusiastic about the placement in a garden anyway, and she would want the family to weigh in on this new plan. Mr. Cooke thought maybe the National Historic Park or the Concord Museum might want them, but Ms. Solomon added that they are not good for display, they are basically scrap slate. There was a reminder that these slates are from 1944, they are not the originals. The consensus reached by the Cemetery Committee is that the library be contacted about considering a new plan. Mr. Rowley will email Ms. Clymer. The slates will be stored until 2020, when the library project will begin, so this is not an urgent matter.

Mr. Rowley reminded the Committee about the Patriots Day Parade, and said a musket volley from Old Hill Burying Ground will be fired at 8:15 a.m.
D-3: MELVIN MEMORIAL REDEDICATION CEREMONY PLANNING:
Ms. Hopkins inquired with The Colonial Inn about holding a reception there, but, due to Father’s Day, they cannot accommodate us, so she suggested the Town House. The rededication ceremony is now set for June 16, 2019, as June 16 is significant due to it being the day of the Charge at Petersburg, which is where Asa Melvin was killed, and it is the date of the original Melvin Memorial dedication. It was agreed that 2:00 p.m. is a good time for the ceremony. Ms. Hopkins said we need invitations and a plan for the day. Mr. Cooke wondered who needs to be invited; there were many suggestions: Melvin and French family members, the Melvin Memorial Restoration Committee, The Friends of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, Mr. Joshua Craine of Daedalus, Inc., the Select Board, the Concord Battery, and Town officials to name a few. Ideas for guest speakers were discussed, and Mr. Cooke suggested renowned Civil War historian Alan Guelzo of Gettysburg College. We will look into the cost of getting him here. Ms. Hopkins offered that her friend, Mr. Joel Bohy, who is a civil war expert and an original member of the Melvin Memorial Restoration Committee, might know someone who could speak. Ms. Hopkins said that many family members are coming from out of state for the event. Ms. Hopkins suggested the Cemetery Committee read the 1909 dedication speech, which is in the original book (Mr. Rowley will send everyone the PDF). Other things to consider are parking, police detail, and people already being in town for Father’s Day.

D-4: DISCUSS AND PREPARE INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS FOR TOWN MEETING:
COLUMBARIUM AND MAUSOLEUM ALTERNATIVE BURIAL SITES:
Mr. Cooke had a conversation with Ms. Carmen Reiss, Town Moderator, about whether the Cemetery Committee should develop articles for Town Meeting regarding our desire to offer columbarium and mausoleum burial options. During that discussion, Ms. Reiss offered to allow the Cemetery Committee the opportunity to distribute informational materials at Town Meeting in an effort to better inform residents. Opinions from the Cemetery Committee members were discussed to determine if this was necessary since we already had a public meeting which was well advertised. It was decided that we would be present at Town Meeting to provide further information by distributing a handout to attendees. Ms. Kocher-Nguyen moved to let Mr. Cooke create materials for Town Meeting, Ms. Solomon seconded, all approved.

D-5: REVIEW REQUEST TO USE TOWN COUNSEL: LOT SALE AND LOT TRANSFER POLICIES:
Mr. Rowley and Ms. Hopkins did some research and found that in 2005 the Cemetery Committee went through a similar process via Town Counsel regarding lot transfers. There used to be an assignment page attached to the deed that allowed people to turn over their lots to others; at some point the Town stopped using this assignment page. Mr. Rowley has prepared a document to present to the Town Manager to request the use of Town Counsel to review documents and policies for transferring ownership. Ms. Solomon says our concern is whether it is a legally binding document; a will has the legal power, but we often do not learn of changes to wills. Ms. Solomon said there has to be a clear, written policy on how these things are handled and what our responsibilities are. Ms. Hopkins reminded us that if someone updates their will, but does not tell us, we have no idea, whereas if it had been transferred through us, we would know ahead of time. Mr. Cooke’s question to the Town Counsel is whether the assignment page and the Cemetery Committee approval system are legally binding. Mr. Rowley will review recent requests we have had and present that to the Town Counsel. Mr. Rowley brought up a related issue, which is the limiting of the number of graves someone can buy. Mr. Rowley sees lot transfers tied into this because if a person buys many lots, there is a chance of many future transfers. Mr. Cooke says we need to have some kind of control to prevent excessive purchases and Ms. Kocher-Nguyen said we could set a limit and entertain exceptions. Ms. Solomon asked what Ms. Hopkins thought was a reasonable limit on a purchase, and she thought ten. Ms. Kocher-Nguyen said we need a written regulation, then we need to vote on it; Mr. Cooke suggested we do this at the next meeting. Mr. Rowley will include this topic in his request to use Town Counsel.
D-6: REVIEW COMMITTEE PRIORITIES FOR 2019:
Mr. Cooke said we have accomplished many of the goals listed in the Master Plan, and many others are in various stages: the tree labeling project, tree removal, headstone cleaning, and the Hoar lot project to list a few. A portion of the $10k annual budget will be used for the Hoar lot project, and a portion for headstone repair.

D-7: SEARCH FOR A NEW COMMITTEE MEMBER AND REVIEW COMMITTEE TERM EXPIRATION DATES:
Mr. Cooke announced that Mr. Soucy is interested in joining the Cemetery Committee. Ms. Connors has officially resigned, so Mr. Cooke will reach out to the Town Manager, and then Mr. Soucy will meet with Mr. Whelan. Regarding term expiration dates: Ms. Harney and Ms. Kocher-Nguyen are both reaching the end of their first terms in 2019, and are eligible for another three years, but they might not continue. Ms. Solomon still has until 2020, and Mr. Cooke’s term will end in 2021. A new Select Board liaison will be added soon as Ms. Alice Kaufman’s term is ending.

D-8: COMMITTEE COMMENTS: (relative to issues contained in this agenda or feedback received from resident(s) since last meeting. None.

D-8: PUBLIC COMMENTS: None.

D-9: SUMMARY OF FOLLOW-UP ITEMS:
Mr. Rowley will email Ms. Clymer about the use of the remaining slates from the Melvin Memorial, Mr. Cooke will wait to hear from Mr. Rowley about inviting Professor Guelzo for the Melvin Memorial rededication, Mr. Rowley will request the use of Town Counsel about the lot transfer policy and limiting grave purchases; Mr. Cooke will contact the Town Manager about Mr. Soucy, Ms. Hopkins and Ms. Harney will meet next week about the invitations for the Melvin Memorial rededication; Ms. Hopkins will be in touch with the Concord Journal. Ms. Solomon will contact The Friends of Sleepy Hollow regarding text for the sign. Mr. Rowley has a donor who wants to help with the Melvin Memorial, so he will contact them when we have more information about costs and needs.

ADJOURNMENT:
The meeting was adjourned at 9:36 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mallory Price, Administrative Assistant
Highway and Grounds Division

Approved,

Paul Cooke, Chairperson
Cemetery Committee

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