

**Town of Concord  
Cemetery Committee Meeting  
April 7, 2021 via ZOOM**

Members Present: Mr. Paul Cooke – Chair  
Ms. Andrea Solomon – Vice Chair  
Mr. Leo Carroll  
Mr. Brian Davidson  
Mr. Jerry Soucy

Also Present: Mr. Aaron Miklosko - Highway & Grounds Superintendent  
Ms. Patricia Hopkins – Cemetery Supervisor  
Ms. Justine St. John – Administrative Assistant for Highway & Grounds  
Ms. Susan Bates – Select Board Liaison

Additional Residents: Barbara Keizer, Rebecca Purcell, KC Winslow, Phil Reilly, T. Beardsley, Bob Birkett, Karin Sprague, Kevin Plodzik, Pat Bentley, Tom Keane, Sylvie Sawyer, Gerard-Rod Reidell, Priscilla Sturges

**ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

- A-1** The meeting was called to order at 4:02 pm. It was announced that the meeting was being video and audio recorded. By roll call vote, the following members were present: Paul Cooke, Andrea Solomon, Jerry Soucy, Brian Davidson and Leo Carroll
- A-2** It was announced that the meeting was being video and audio recorded.
- A-3** Fifteen deeds for signing.
- A-4** Next Meeting will be May 5, 2021 AT 4:00PM via ZOOM
- A-5** Meeting Minutes from March 3, 2021 were not reviewed-will be reviewed at May 5<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS**

**D-1: CHAIR COMMENTS:**

Mr. Cooke wanted to thank Mr. Miklosko, Ms. Trout and Ms. St. John for setting up the Zoom meetings over this past year. He also welcomed Rod Riedel and Rebecca Purcell who have both submitted electronic green cards, and are interested in serving on the Cemetery Committee.

**D-2: STAFF REPORT:**

Highway Superintendent Miklosko reported (8) full interments, (1) cremation interment and (22) lots sold in the month of March. It has been a fairly quiet for the month of March. Staff is starting spring cleanup and getting ready to contact the landscape contractor Einstein's. Cemetery Supervisor Hopkins has been working on maintaining graves, including some that may have settled over the winter. Notification went out in News and Notes that personal items would be removed in anticipation of the spring cleanup. Tree work continues in the Cemetery-pruning and removals,

both with the Town's private contractor and CPW's Park & Tree Department. Ms. Hopkins had nothing further to report-she is continuing with spring cleanup operations.

**D-3: MELVIN MEMORIAL DOCUMENTARY PRESENTATION:**

Mr. Cook introduced former Cemetery Chair, KC Winslow. Her son, Ben Winslow, produced a documentary called "Everlasting Dedication", dedicated to the Melvin Brothers and their Memorial. Ms. Winslow spoke to the history of how the idea of the documentary came about, with a lot of effort and dedication from Ms. Hopkins. Video is posted on YouTube and it has over 1,000 views. Ms. Winslow played the video and after the viewing, Mr. Cooke inquired as to whether we may be able to post it on the website. Mr. Miklosko will work with Erin Stevens to get this accomplished.

**D-4: THURSTON HANDLEY GARDEN PROPOSAL BY FRIENDS OF SLEEPY HOLLOW:**

Mr. Cooke introduced Kevin Plodzick and the Friends of Sleepy Hollow, who proposed a garden installation in honor of Thurston and Carolyn Handley. Mr. Plodzick explained that a subcommittee of their Committee had decided to revisit the Handley Commemorative Garden that had been created some years ago in recognition of the time and energy the Handleys had spent beautifying the Cemetery over the years. Mr. Plodzick advised that the Strawberry Hill Landscaping Firm had been selected to do the work and Ms. Sylvie Sawyer had worked on drawing the proposal. Ms. Sawyer walked through the thought process developing this proposal, incorporating a focal point and planting hardy, low maintenance plantings. Ms. Hopkins asked about the plan to include mulch, as it's not allowed in the Cemetery. Mr. Tom Keane (from Strawberry Hill Landscaping) explained it was new type of mulch that isn't typically seen in residential areas, but he recommends it for a new garden. Mr. Keane advised they will just use the organic compost and add a few more plantings which should negate the need for mulch. Mr. Miklosko said if the Cemetery Committee decides to approve, Ms. Hopkins would work with the contractor as the project moves forward. Mr. Miklosko asked about the expectation of maintenance, and if there is commitment from the Friends of Sleepy Hollow to provide more maintenance than Operations currently provides. Ms. Sawyer stated she specifically chose these plants so they can thrive even during neglect or weather. They should only need basic maintenance-feed and weed once a year or so-and she is willing to do that. Mr. Davidson asked how one would access the garden. The garden is accessible from behind the bench, or the roadway, but people shouldn't have to walk over graves. Mr. Plodzick advised that if the Cemetery Committee accepts this, the Friends of Sleepy Hollow will present to the Select Board to request acceptance of the gift. Ms. Hopkins asked who would move the bench. Mr. Keane said he would. Ms. Hopkins said she would share the specs for the foundation needed. Mr. Davidson asked about an ongoing commitment regarding maintenance and Ms. Sawyer explained she believes these plants will not need any other maintenance. Mr. Miklosko said CPW staff reviewed the proposal and is supportive of it from an operations standpoint. Mr. Plodzick expressed appreciation of the partnership between Friends of Sleepy Hollow and the Cemetery Committee and also advised the Friends will soon be celebrating their twenty year anniversary.

Leo Carroll made a motion to accept the plan and project from the Friends of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery regarding the Handley Garden. Andrea Solomon seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

Andrea Solomon – Aye  
Jerry Soucy – Aye  
Leo Carroll - Aye  
Paul Cooke – Aye  
Brian Davidson – Aye

#### **D-5: OVERSIZED STONE REQUEST FOR GRANT LOT:**

Ms. Hopkins explained a request from the Grant Family to put an oversized slate stone on their two grave lot. The width is 14" wider than allowable. Mr. Cooke asked where the site was located. Ms. Hopkins advised it is in the new section, near the Cemetery office. Mr. Davidson requested a description of the marker. Ms. Karin Sprague, the designer, advised it is a raw piece of slate that had been cleaved from a quarry. Once she saw the lettering placed on the slate, she felt she would ask if she could keep it in that state, because she doesn't want to alter the raw, natural look of the slate boulder. Mr. Soucy asked if it was a flat slate or three dimensional. She said 22" are set below ground. 41" is the height above ground, with an initial width of 6" wide, tapering to a gradual edge.

Leo Carroll motioned to accept the stone at its current size. Andrea Solomon seconded.  
Motion passed 5-0

Andrea Solomon – Aye  
Jerry Soucy – Aye  
Leo Carroll - Aye  
Paul Cooke – Aye  
Brian Davidson – Aye

#### **D-6: DISCUSSION-MONUMENT APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS:**

Mr. Cooke advised he had received correspondence from Mr. Davidson suggesting discussion about language in Article 5 of the Cemetery Rules and Regulations, considering monuments and markers. Mr. Davidson spoke about his concerns and possible suggestions. He is wondering if the committee should work on tightening the language, to be able to reject a headstone if the committee didn't feel it was appropriate. Mr. Davidson presented proposed language that stated "the Cemetery Committee shall have the authority to reject any memorial that, on account of its size type design inscription quality color or method of construction is unsuitable for the appearance dignity or character of the Cemetery". Mr. Carroll asked the purpose of tightening the language. Mr. Davidson wanted to maximize freedom of expression, but also wants to recognize that someone could put something on the stone and if it is rejected, could appear arbitrary. Ms. Solomon wonders if adding that language actually makes it more arbitrary. Mr. Miklosko stated in addition to Article 5, there is a monument application that needs to be signed off by Operations. Currently Operations approves monument applications, not the Cemetery Committee. If there is a concern, Operations brings it to the Cemetery Committee for review. Mr. Davidson is concerned there is no rule to reject. Ms. Hopkins reviewed the Monument Application and Mr. Cooke reviewed further that in the Cemetery Rules and Regulations there is a "Permanent Violation" clause, but Mr. Davidson is concerned that even though the Cemetery Committee is the final authority, and he doesn't feel there are rules that can guide those decisions. Mr. Davidson appreciates the ability to continue to have the discussion. Mr. Carroll is concerned as he doesn't want to judge something just because it doesn't agree with their taste and he wants to be careful not to be too prescriptive. Mr. Miklosko offered to work with Mr. Davidson off line to review the regulations and possibly come up with something. Mr. Soucy then advised he needed to excuse himself from the meeting (5:17pm).

#### **D-7: UPDATE ON PRIORITY PROJECTS:**

**Mausoleum Sites:** Mr. Miklosko advised a total of 5 mausoleum lots are being marked out by the Engineering Department, in the Old and New section of the Cemetery.

**Records Scanning:** Mr. Miklosko reported the scanning of the records is continuing. When it is finished, it will be shared with the committee and available to the public.

**Headstone Restoration:** Mr. Miklosko reported they are pausing this project for a few months, due to some transitions in the operations of his department. However, it's anticipated to get two years of headstones restored over the summer (after July 1).

#### **D-8: MASTER PLAN CONTINUED DISCUSSION:**

**Tree Planting/Erosion Control:** Mr. Carroll advised he had met with Mr. Miklosko and Mr. Shaw. They've decided to try planting grass in a few spots to try to learn what is needed to grow in that area. He feels there has been a lot of time and money that have gone into trying to figure this out, and nothing has worked yet. He is enthusiastic about this direction, looking into plantings and grasses that don't grow as tall. He expects they will have new loam, top soil and plantings in the next few months. They haven't had soil analyzed yet from UMASS, but this seems like a better avenue at the moment.

**Columbaria:** Ms. Solomon advised she and Mr. Soucy are meeting as the Columbarium Subcommittee on Thursday April 8<sup>th</sup> to further discuss design. They are keeping the discussion going as they also need to figure out next steps which will probably be budget and design. Budget for that was added to the proposed F22 budget, so \$10,000 will hopefully be set aside for potential design.

**Undeveloped Land Use:** Mr. Davidson spoke about continuing to monitor developments with the Reformatory Branch Trail and different subcommittees. He also heard a presentation from Bryan Windmiller, who studies the Blanding's turtles. They have a lot of activity in the Moore's Swamp area. Mr. Windmiller is looking into increasing vegetation that benefits the turtles, and Mr. Davidson thought it might be interesting to hear how the Cemetery Committee might be able to help with that process.

Mr. Davidson also commented about signage that was being developed on for the Cemetery-Mr. Miklosko advised the signs have been designed and he is awaiting a proof. They will read "Sleepy Hollow Cemetery is an active burial ground. Please use these grounds quietly and respectfully. All dogs must be leashed" they will be posted along the trailheads off the Reformatory Branch system. Mr. Carroll thought having some wording about bicycles mentioned might be helpful. Ms. Barbara Keizer, 1 Lexington Road, said she would love a sign about No Dogs at the Old Hill Burying Ground, and she also didn't realize there were issues about bicycles, and maybe there should be signs about that. Mr. Cooke asked about the bicycle signage suggestion and Mr. Miklosko recommended we move forward with signs as proposed at this point. Mr. Cooke agrees he's not happy about bicycles operating in a disrespectful manner. He suggested to put it on the agenda for next time. Mr. Davidson asked if the Committee wanted to hear from Mr. Windmiller. Mr. Carroll and Ms. Solomon agreed it was a good idea.

**Mausoleum Sites for New Area of Sleepy Hollow:** Mr. Cooke stated the Mausoleum update had already been discussed, so they can strike it from the list for tonight.

**A Review of the History of the New Area of Sleepy Hollow:** Mr. Cooke explained that Bob Birkett had written an email regarding the layout of the New Section of Sleepy Hollow, and Mr. Cooke felt it would be good to discuss the history of how that came to be. Ms. Hopkins explained the history, including a revision on an existing plan twenty years ago, due to a thought that the Cemetery could run out of space. Mr. Birkett stated he was disappointed with the presentation of New versus Old sections in the Cemetery. He feels there should be some taller trees and places where one could sit and reflect. He suggested possible visual barriers that would help screen from some of the private property toward the back of the Cemetery. Mr. Cooke thanked Mr. Birkett for speaking about this, advised it may be something to explore in the future and urged him not to give up.

**D-9: COMMITTEE COMMENTS:**

Mr. Carroll advised he had gone to the Sleepy Hollow Friends Committee meeting, and some are suggesting providing more signage on the trees in Sleepy Hollow. There will be more discussion, but he wanted the Committee to be aware.

**D-10: PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

No public comments.

**D-11: SUMMARY OF FOLLOW UP ITEMS**

Mr. Cooke thanked Rod Reidel and Rebecca Purcell for coming to the meeting. He thanked Town Staff for their continued work and also commended Ms. Hopkins on her work with the George Dugan Memorial initiative. Follow up for next month includes bicycles in Cemetery, including tracks across graves, a Blanding's turtles discussion, and discuss the Master Plan considering the New section and its development.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Mr. Davidson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 17:57 P.M. Ms. Solomon seconded. (4-0)

Andrea Solomon – Aye  
Brian Davidson – Aye  
Jerry Soucy – Absent  
Paul Cooke – Aye  
Leo Carroll - Aye

Respectfully Submitted,

Approved,

Justine St. John  
Administrative Assistant, Highway & Grounds Division

Paul Cooke, Chairperson  
Cemetery Committee