

Cemetery Committee Meeting Minutes

Final

March 21st, 2022

Present: Andy Tolman, Marianne Perry, Warren Norris, Ben Rodriguez, Tom Molokie, Brenda Lake, Karen Peterson, Pam Osborn, Grace Keene (Remotely)

Special Guests: Terra Delong and Emily Carney of Wreaths Across America (Remotely)

Meeting Minutes for Prior Meeting: Minutes for February were reviewed. Marianne made motion to accept the minutes, Grace seconded. There was no discussion and minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes will be submitted to Town Clerk.

Sexton's Report by Ben Rodriguez

Ben found a box in a storage area that contained a trove of information. It included notes of old plot pricing, cemetery maps from the 1980s, data on the iron fencing repair from 1989. In addition, it contained old burial cards with more veterans' information. Ben will endeavor to absorb and catalogue the new old information.

Ben has received an order of flags, plenty for the coming year's needs. He will begin planning for the flag placement activities in the coming season, this will include the activities where we recruited the help of the Historical Society's Dale Potter-Clark.

Ben has placed an order for veterans' gravesite markers:

- 2 Revolutionary War markers
- 2 World War II markers
- 2 US Veteran universal markers

Maintenance attention will begin soon after more snow melts. Ben will focus on the downed tree limbs and debris. Stevenson Solutions has called to confirm his availability to handle tree issues. Joseph Ferrannini from Grave Stone Matters and Hugh LeMaster from Collette Monuments are on standby to begin stone repair. Ben is reviewing whether to begin some new work in Readfield Corner. He is also in contact with Tom Jacobs about the repair of his mother's damaged stone.

Service maintenance of equipment should be light as the mowers worked fine after last season. Some weed whacking equipment may need servicing at Audette's in Winthrop. Tom Molokie ventured a comment about the use of battery powered equipment and his anecdotal positive experience. Marianne agreed that with today's cost of fossil fuels this could be a consideration. Ben summarized the pros and cons:

- Electric is quieter, fumeless, and potential for fuel spills is eliminated.
- Electric, however, has higher upfront capital cost and while power is catching up, electrical batteries require frequent change out and are cumbersome, not field conducive.
- Fuel costs in the future may dictate a reconsideration.

One of the maps Ben found indicated a circle toward the fairgrounds that is labeled "well". Karen confirmed that there was a well drilled there in the past. Ben will investigate and determine if this is something that exists and can be exploited for water use at Readfield Corner.

Stone repairs this year may be augmented with town performing some of the repairs. To this end Ben has acquired a wet/dry vac and a generator and will be purchasing additional stone repair supplies soon. He is working with town to determine which budget account applies to the equipment purchases. The likelihood is

that the larger town maintenance budget will apply. Grace and Pam pointed out that this is preferential as we want to spend our obligated funds to the repair of the stones.

Old Business

Ben has provided a list of veterans buried in the town's various cemeteries. These lists show current information. Ben has indicated that new information is being discovered all the time with his lists updated as this occurs. The lists were added to the minute circulation last month and sent to the town clerk as addenda to the March minutes.

New Business

We began our zoom meeting with the representatives from Wreaths Across America. These were Terra Delong, Region 1 Liaison, and Emily Carney, Maine Coordinator. Wreaths Across America is a 501 c (3) – non-profit providing a service nationwide. They provide wreaths at a competitive cost for veterans' gravesites.

Terra opened with a description of the services offered by her organization. These are encapsulated in the pages of their website found at www.wreathsacrossamerica.org (link).

The committee provided her with multiple questions regarding the service which she and Emily answered:

- What is the average time frame needed to organize work with WAA?

She answered this by describing the length of time from now until delivery of the wreaths to the designated locations. The cutoff date for any changes in wreath count needed for the cemeteries is November 28th and delivery is December 17th. She noted that if we elected to proceed, that there is plenty of time.

- How and when are wreaths delivered?

After determining the location coordinator for the town, delivery address locations are needed:

- First a FedEx or UPS address for delivering the ceremonial wreaths and service flags. Each service branch including POWMIA and the Merchant Marine are represented.
- A 2nd, to the same or other address for delivery of smaller shipments of wreaths generally under 100 to around 200 wreaths.
- A delivery address for tractor-trailer sized quantities > 300 wreaths.

This delivery takes place in mid-December.

- Has there been a positive reception to your service by other municipalities in Maine?

Reception is positive. Of the 68 participants in Maine from last year 50 locations are reinstating. This also reflects 34 sponsorships. It is still early in the year for the reinstatements. Locations range from South Portland to Presque Isle and Down East.

- What assistance can WAA provide in organizing volunteers to set wreaths?

Once a location coordinator is set up WAA works with the person to begin a three-step process:

- Volunteers
- Community Support
- Communication

The website has many features that help the location coordinator track progress. It includes forms, dashboards and a message service for notifying volunteers.

- Is there a certain number of volunteers that need to be secured before the cemeteries in the Town of Readfield can work with WAA to set wreaths?

No, there is no set number required. This will depend entirely on the number and commitment of the community. The representatives noted that the participation in the wreath setting is varied but cemeteries of the sizes of Readfield can be attended to in a day. Ben agreed with this assessment.

- What are some key factors that you have seen that have resulted in successful partnerships with WAA?

Successful partnerships occur when the communication is good. The Maine WAA coordinator noted that as soon as there is a location entered into the website she begins a shepherding period, moving the town's coordinator through the steps to a successful conclusion.

- What is the cost to the town to participate in this project?

The cash outlay to the town should be zero. The town's contribution should be in sexton's time and a modicum of labor by other town employees to move wreaths after delivery.

- Who supplies the wreaths and does WAA control the purchase?

WAA supplies the wreaths through their sourced supplier. As such they purchase the wreaths.

- How does the funding work, public, private?

Costs are borne by the sponsors. Sponsors are provided by local contacts. In the case of Readfield these might be Kents Hill School, Saunders, Maranacook Middle and High Schools, Masonic Lodge, United Methodist Church, DAR and SAR.

- Are there sponsorships outside the community that can defray expenses?

Home Depot and Walmart are known to provide matching funds for WAA activities. WAA can help the location coordinator identify grants.

- Will WAA provide/set wreaths to all of Readfield's cemeteries?

WAA will provide the sponsored wreaths. They will deliver the wreaths but not set them.

- Is any part of the wreath recyclable?

The only part of the wreath that is not recyclable is the bow. Typically once removed they filled a large trash bag. The wire frame and the greenery is recyclable. Tom noted that Eric Johnson's Alpacas would love them otherwise they are compostable. They are treated with pesticides due to disease or infestation when necessary. They are fertilized for needle retention and growth. The WAA has provided written documentation for recyclers to make informed decision. Their certification is attached.

- What are typical donations received or expected for these wreaths?

The wreaths cost \$15 each. Sponsorships have ranged from a single wreath to thousands of dollars in participant contributions. Group sponsors can opt 3-for-2 wreath option. For every two wreaths purchased under the group sponsorship a third wreath is provided free of charge. If sponsorships exceed the wreaths

needed on a given year the excess is rolled over to the following year or at sponsor discretion donated to other cemeteries.

- Other points of information

The wreaths are generally laid on the ground leaning slightly on the upright stone so as not to obscure the veteran's name. A tripod stand is not provided, but is a discretionary item of the cemetery. Families sometimes request to be at the wreath-laying. The town can plan to secure wreaths for a one cemetery or all the cemeteries by choice or determined by effectiveness of funding or sponsorships.

- Contact info for Terra Delong

Telephone number 207-470-0965

Email terradelong@wreathscrossamerica.org

This concluded the WAA presentation. A brief discussion occurred after which Tom moved that we proceed with further investigation cautiously without commitment. This was seconded by Pam. Discussion centered around the several pertinent facts:

- Andy: the committee should not bear the responsibility and time of fundraising
- Tom: recommended that the select board be informed and recommendations from them be conveyed to committee
- Marianne: we should keep in mind that the donation-dollar is scarce and individuals have difficult financial choices to make
- Warren: ease into the commitment by doing one or two cemeteries
- Grace and Pam: honor all the veterans this way or not at all
- Brenda, Grace: town or committee funds should not be committed
- Ben: reminded us that town's resources will be limited to labor and may be augmented with volunteers

Tom amended his motion that this remain on the agenda and Select Board be contacted. This was 2nd by Marianne. The amended motion passed unanimously.

Tom moved to adjourn meeting, Marianne 2nd, Chair waived discussion, unanimously agreed. Next meeting is April 25th, 2022 at 10:30 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Warren Norris
Cemetery Committee