

Cemetery Committee Meeting Minutes

November 21, 2022

Present: Brenda Lake, Marianne Perry, Warren Norris, Ben Rodriguez, Tom Molokie, Karen Peterson, Grace Keene, Lee Livingston, Pam Osborn, Andy Tolman (Chair), Eric Dyer (Town Manager)

Meeting Minutes for Prior Meeting: Prior meeting minutes were reviewed ex parte and will be submitted for December meeting.

Sexton's Report by Ben Rodriguez

Ben reported on Fall Clean Up progress. This year several young adults from Kents Hill School helped with leaf removal for the school's community service day. This included 8 students and 2 faculty. Their help was highly effective and greatly appreciated.

Kents Hill is half completed for cleanup due to early snow, bulk leaf mulching will be completed after the small number of sticks are picked up. A large tree branch fell from a tree that needs to come down. Stevensons will provide a quote to remove it and another precarious tree.

Whittier is nearing completion. Others aren't completed. They will have to wait for the early snow to melt.

Veterans' Day preparation went smoothly with flags and their holders in place. More holders will have to be ordered for next fiscal year. This was after checking and double-checking interments.

The Veterans' Day celebration was successful. Officiating was the Readfield Historical Society. Attending were the local Girl Scouts, VFW Local 40 and the 2nd Maine Regiment. There was a presentation and a musket volley with the walk from Readfield Corner to the Memorial in front of town hall. Great appreciation to Melissa Small and her library volunteers who provided help, information and enthusiasm to the event.

Tom Molokie motion: To write a letter to the Readfield Historical Society from the Cemetery committee congratulating them on a successful day and presenting the Town, our Veterans, and our cemeteries in a fine light in accordance with our charter. Tom volunteered to write the letter for signing by Andy as committee chair and us, as members. Brenda seconded. Discussion over what a fine idea this was. Voted – unanimous.

Our interest in Wreaths Across America is bearing fruit. The organization will provide the armed services ceremonial wreaths for the December 17th presentation. Foehammer Forge Works, a local artisan, will provide 8 wreath holders for the WAA-provided wreaths. Ben will communicate with Melissa Wright, the local Girl Scout troop leader, who expressed interest in some involvement. Suggestion made to pass out brochures at the transfer station. Posters for WAA event will be posted in public places, such as the library, post office and town hall. Also, ad will be placed in Advertiser. A Select Board member will be asked to speak.

Regular wreaths will be displayed at each cemetery by December 1st.

Committee volunteered to pick up balance of flags in the cemeteries since Veterans' Day is past. Grace completed East Readfield; Brenda will take care of Case, Huntoon and Whittier; Tom and Lee will pick up Readfield Corner and Marianna will be responsible for Kents Hill.

For edification of the committee, Brenda requested count of veterans for each cemetery. Ben will comply.

New Business

Eric Dyer presented on a new accounting philosophy that will more broadly reflect the town's interest in showing citizens our investment in recreational activities. The beach and the cemeteries are among the town assets that are extremely important to this philosophy. The accounting will better balance funds between capital and operating reserve accounts.

Eric asks that prioritization be placed on operating reserves. Eric will restructure the cemetery reserve by assigning a special reserve account. Sums in the accounts remaining from one fiscal year will not be automatically passed into reserve accounts for the next year. This will help create another level of accountability. Funds remaining will go back to the general fund account then be re-allocated in the next budget year.

Perpetual Care funds will be untouched by these changes but will be moved into Treo (accounting platform) and no longer tracked in Excel. Large capital items will continue to go into yearly accrual accounts.

Grace asked if Perpetual Care funds will be used last. Eric will check and get back to committee.

Discussion turned to the Church Road improvements. Ben remarked that the road was graded with improvement to the middle mound by the Readfield Corner cemetery. Ditching was improved too. Eric noted that any further drainage work will be out of the road budget. Ben and Eric agree that to date the drainage is performing well.

Budget Considerations and Discussion

Andy discussed priorities for the committee over the next few months. It is important that we devote the next meeting to prioritizing budget matters and set aside discussion of by-law and rules changes till later in the Spring. This will allow the committee time to research items that are pressing for the rules changes.

Budget review items to consider:

- Tree work costs will be higher due to inflation
- Stone work considerations include wall touch up: stabilization over gross improvement
- Flags
- Operating and maintenance costs
- Monument repair
- Gradual but prudent use of operating reserves

Andy recommended that we use \$7,000 from the Perpetual Care fund for tree trimming and stone repair. Grace felt that \$10,000 was a more appropriate level. This would be ancillary spending to defray or limit use of taxpayer funds by using the general operating funds.

Because monument work is going to continue to be an important focus discussion turned to the cost of our vendors. Ben pointed out that Joe Ferranini's strength is older monuments while Collette's strength was repointing, curbing and large modern monuments. A local monument company is being sought for replacing illegible/sugared/irreparable monuments.

Question by Pam: What is our responsibility to preserve a stone that is irreparable after many years? Answer: It's the committee's charter and why Perpetual Care is important to the overall budget planning.

Question by Tom: Which is more important: Trees or Stones? Ben's response: They have equal importance.

Tom Molokie's motion: Utilize \$10,000 of Perpetual Care funds, splitting the amount and spending 50% for trees and 50% for Stones. Grace 2nd. Discussion followed with Pam's amending motion to take funding first from other reserve or operating accounts. Andy followed with discussion on reserve accounts. Tom further amended his original motion by adding the stipulation that there be 0% increase in the budget. Discussion was lively and led to Motion by Warren to table discussion until Andy made a suggested budget for next meeting. 2nd by Tom. Unanimous approval.

Next meeting is December 19th, 2022. Town Hall. Christmas Cookies!

Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:44 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Warren Norris
Cemetery Committee