

Cemetery Committee Meeting Minutes

January 15th, 2020

Present: Andy Tolman, Grace Keene, Pam Osborn, Marianne Perry, Warren Norris, Ben Rodriguez

Meeting Minutes for December 18th, 2019: Motion made to accept minutes with proposed changes and seconded, discussion pursuant and amended minutes were approved unanimously.

Sexton's Report by Ben Rodriguez

Ben discussed online Build vs. Buy eBook that compares options for municipalities to make decisions when evaluating either commercially provided software or an option to build a system from scratch. Ben recommended that the committee review it as background information.

He summarized the two subcommittee go-to-meetings with cemetery management software companies and provided a written report of them. The two vendors reviewed were PlotBox and CemSites. He noted that there are some differences between ability/desire to fold in Town capabilities (GIS) as well as differences in modularization and cost. Subcommittee is investigating how to use local resources to get town data (burial cards, excel lists and written records) into a usable system, i.e., the "Build" in Build vs. Buy, to help defray initial costs. Subcommittee will continue to schedule meetings with vendors to learn more about options and offerings.

Ben also mentioned that he will continue to look for other municipalities, those that are using this software. He has an example of Greenland, NH. This town has 11 cemeteries and they investigated Pontem, another vendor, but selected CemSites due to ease of data transfer.

Discussion followed: it was agreed that the implementation of this project will have a great financial effect in the freeing of the sexton's time to attend to the human part of his job, i.e., finding available lots for interested parties and locating the sites where loved ones are buried. Committee encouraged the sexton to continue his efforts.

Old Business

Ben will reach out to the Case Cemetery neighbors to double check access as the tree work will begin as soon as conditions permit. The budget already reflects this additional expense. Whittier tree work is anticipated to be complete within the next month, again as conditions warrant. It is noted that the work to fix the tree has taken place in prior years, this therefore reflects the town's due diligence in attempting to save an appreciated tree. Unfortunately, the new damage to the tree will not allow further attempts at preservation.

The status of the water accumulation at the perimeter of the Readfield Corner cemetery was queried by the committee and updated by the sexton. Ben remarked that Anna had reviewed the problem in discussions with the road committee. She had stated that there is not enough clearance in the soil to add a 10" culvert. The alternative is to level the location to remove the impediment to drainage. Although there has been no vehicle access, further access could be discouraged by adding a small garden.

New Business

Bicentennial activities were discussed. The committee feels it is important that the Cemetery Committee can perform its chartered role but also use its' and the town's resources to add value to the town's cemeteries above and beyond normal maintenance. Grace also suggested that in celebration of this important milestone we focus on a visible cemetery such as Case Cemetery especially since we're removing trees. Marianne agreed to look into trees, particularly trees, shrubs and flowers that are usual and accepted in Maine cemeteries by reviewing suggestions from the County Extension Office in Farmington.

It was agreed that we spend \$1000 for expanding trees and gardens initially at Case in celebration of the Bicentennial. Further discussion included putting a blurb in the Readfield Messenger describing our plans and to also investigate what happened with the cemeteries in Readfield in 1820 to celebrate Maine's founding.

Stonework was discussed. Cemetery Committee members agreed that the stonework is a priority and that work must continue on the rock wall. Andy noted that Gary Mann has time to continue his repairs there.

Ben asked that he be sent for training on the proper procedures for up-righting and fixing stones. Training expenses are usually allocated under building supplies. The cost is likely to be \$700 plus his time.

Warren was tasked to research Wreaths Across America. Rachel Worchester was the contact. This is a good alternative to our holiday wreath laying, but is more involved because each veteran's grave gets a wreath. Most large cemeteries that use the WAA's services employ sponsorships to afford it. A representative can be arranged to meet with us if there is a desire to go forward. Further action was tabled.

Motion made to close meeting (M/S/V). Adjourned 2:25 pm.

Next scheduled full committee meeting is scheduled for February 19th, 2020.

Warren Norris
Cemetery Committee