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DATE: October 29, 2021
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Belmont Board of Cemetery Commissioners Meeting Minutes

September 28, 2021

I. Call to order

Chairman Ellen O'Brien Cushman called to order the scheduled and posted BOCC meeting at 8:33am, via Zoom.

II. Roll call

Alex Corbett, Clerk, conducted a roll call. The following persons were present:

Members: Ellen O'Brien Cushman, Bill Chemelli, Alex Corbett

Also Attending: Jay Marcotte, Michael Santoro, Frank Sartori, Jeff Currier (via phone in) Approval of minutes from last meeting

none

III. Agenda Items

a) Complaints Received

Judy Arrigo- conditions in her family lot area: (circa 1966 development)

Huron Towers area in the rear of Belmont Cemetery. Excessive tree limbs and growth over that area, ground ivy growing. Frank, Jay and Ellen met Judy and her husband on site. Staff will apply herbicide and reseed in the Spring.

Jay will contact Cambridge DPW-Arborist (Andrew Putnam) in the next week or two, to see if they are willing to perform tree limb cleanup behind the fencing, that we presume is Cambridge public open land. Since the onsite meeting, our contractor, Asplundh, removed the limb that had fallen onto the fence. This will help the area's regrowth in the spring; no seeding can be performed this fall. In addition to the ivy, and limbs there is concern about the open area between the fence and former hedge row leading to a "cliff". The area used to have a large hedge row and apparent removal of some of the shrubs has left the opening. Frank and Jeff will attend to this potential hazard.

b) Steep Slope area of graves on the Huron Towers side

Difficult area to maintain- must be done with trimming equipment- 2-3 times a season it is trimmed. Jeff will attempt to get that area attended to tended more frequently, depending on staff



levels. The steep slope prevents mowers and must be trimmed with string trimmer instead. The stones should be revealed and at least one should be uprighted.

c) **Karl Ivester- via Facebook posting- Veterans' Section in Belmont Cemetery**

Discussed said posting and comments that followed. We felt it was overplaying the negativity of the condition. Jeff told us that area gets weekly attention within the "looped" care cycle of the entire grounds. The complaint of the flagpole NOT being lit after dusk, was discussed. Alex will purchase, donate and install (with staff approval granted in advance) a solar, LED lighting unit, affixed eight' up the pole. Technically the grounds are closed to visitors at dusk, but this flag must be lit if it remains up, and it will be! The general consensus was to allow Alex to perform this work and the commissioners are grateful for Alex's initiative.

d) **Staffing**

Staffing was discussed as the major component of the recent spell of complaints. They are down one full time person BUT have enlisted 2-3 part time people to do trimming effective next week. Town Retirees are being "trained in trimming." That should help, significantly, once they get up to speed. There is a significant amount of trimming required at Belmont Cemetery due to the upright headstones.

D. Muzzioli Associates was brought in to perform some of the work the staff could not get to because of staffing shortages at Belmont Cemetery. Frank indicated there is a budget item for this type of work.

It was discussed that the entrance "Heart Bed" washas some highly invasive Swallowwort, hat needs to be removed ASAP to prevent its takeover of the bed! Frank and Jeff will attend to it.

Ellen reported about Mt. Auburn Cemetery's reduction in the use of herbicides and this was discussed. They are changing their "direction of care," allowing more clover and deemphasizing the "Turf Grass" image and promoting a more natural look. We will attempt to gather more information.

e) **Belmont Cemetery's asphalt road and pathway conditions**

Many areas of complaint and concern have been brought to the Commission's attention- specifically the pavement on Norton Circle area in the back area.



Alex suggested we identify the areas of most concern and selectively cut out the asphalt in the worst areas, regrade, compact, binder and top those areas. Mike will reach out to David Sacca, N. Sacca & Sons, a town contracted, paving contracting firm, for a proposal. Mike indicated he would try to at least get the Norton Circle area done this season.

f) **Highland Meadow**

Items placed on graves, including flags, are truly making it much more difficult for maintenance and the pots and permanent ornaments are in violation of the cemetery rules A common theme mentioned by our staff. Removal and storage at Grove Street maintenance building will continue.

A “flag placement on graves” policy at both cemeteries, was discussed in relation to maintenance. It was noted that Lexington’s West View Cemetery (a flat marker cemetery) has a flag policy only allowing flags to be placed from Memorial Day to Flag Day. A discussion with the Veteran’s Officer should take place before any formal policy is instituted. Ellen will invite Bob Upton to a future meeting to discuss.

IV. Old Business

a) **PeopleGIS - “WebCemetery” Project**

Kick off in the next week or two, very exciting.

b) **Data and Phone service to the Grove Street Office**

Verizon is OUT... Comcast continues to be our only option. Dave Petto is proceeding with that contract that we had previously approved. It is not installed yet.

c) **Stantec project at HMC**

Still no report. Mike will contact Stantec and find out why this project has gone on for so long without status or getting us a final report. We may want a representative at our next meeting. Mike will report back.

d) **Belmont Day School - roadway buffer planting issue**



The planting buffer to Highland Meadow Cemetery is NOT at the level dictated by the approved plan and required to protect our cemetery interests. Ellen will speak with Lauren and the Day School

Glenn Clancy is the Town's enforcement officer for the Planning Board to get this plan to the level approved by the Planning Board, Cemetery Commission and Day School.

This absolutely was a condition of their "Barn Building" approval.

e) **Signage**

Alex is working on a design proof, using the input from the August 31st meeting.

f) **Staffing**

Again, staffing was discussed. The Commission asked if additional staff could be put into next year's budget request. Part time seasonal help that was cut should also be replaced.

V. Adjournment

Chairman Ellen O'Brien Cushman adjourned the meeting at 10:02 am.

Minutes submitted by: Alexander E. Corbett, III