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DATE: April 22, 2021
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Belmont Board of Cemetery Commissioners Meeting Minutes

July 18, 2019

I. Call to order

Chairman Ellen O'Brien Cushman called to order the scheduled and posted BOCC meeting at 7:36 AM on July 18, 2019, in the first-floor conference room at Belmont Town Hall.

II. Roll call

Alex Corbett, Clerk, conducted a roll call. The following persons were present: Ellen O'Brien Cushman, Bill Chemelli, and myself. Frank Sartori and Michael Santoro from Belmont DPW were also in attendance.

III. Approval of minutes from last meeting

None- Alex took the May 15, 2019 meeting minutes and is working on transcription.

IV. Open issues

A. Tree removal at Highland Meadow Cemetery

Frank informed commission that a large tree was removed at Highland Meadow over safety concerns. When Asplundh was removing the tree, a very large limb unexpectedly fell on the wall dividing the meadow and woodland zones, damaging the wall. Frank will oversee the repair, and the Board asked that the work be done by a qualified mason to match the rest of the wall with interior mortar.

B. Border Planting Bed at Highland Meadow Cemetery (along Concord Avenue)

A discussion of the condition of the large border planting bed at Highland Meadow was held. Ellen showed some recent photos with large weeds, invasive species, vines, Tree of Heaven, and sumac within the landscape border. It does not look as though anyone has been maintaining the planted bushes, trees and shrubs or removing the undesirables. It is not clear whether the staff is not confident in their ability to maintain the landscape border, they have not dedicated time or something else. Alex and Ellen remarked that the walls and landscape border are the only non-natural features onsite, and we must take care of them and include that care in our normal operating activities and budget. Bill agreed. The Cemetery Commission feels very strongly that this immediate clean up needs to happen right away and should be paid from the operating budget for the cemetery. It is clear to the Commission, and generally was agreed by Frank and Mike that the expertise



needed at this time to perform the cleanup must be able to trim the trees and shrubs and identify and pull or cut any undesirable plants. Then, a yearly item for ongoing maintenance should be included in the budget, even if a tradeoff must happen to drop the frequency of mowing, etc. to maintain the budget numbers. The Commission voted unanimously the following:

Ellen will contact Halvorson (original landscape architect), The Trustees and Lauren Meier in hope of identifying the skills necessary for a vendor to perform the immediate clean-up work and perhaps identify some qualified companies to do so. She will pass along the info to Mike to follow the procurement procedures.

Ellen will immediately have Chris Polatin of Land Stewardship, Inc, a licensed vendor who manages invasive on Lone Tree Hill Belmont Conservation Land to take a look and treat any invasives he finds on the cemetery property particularly along the landscape border and depression. Payment is under the same agreement as for Lone Tree Hill, time, and materials.

In addition, the depression that serves as a detention area for surface runoff appears to be filling up with weeds and holding the water longer than expected. Alex suggested that it may be time to “muck out” the depression to free the top surface of any silt that is clogging the soil decreasing the permeability. In addition, Alex and Mike discussed the level of the soil in relation to the drainage pipe that channels surface water under the cemetery roadway to the depression. Mike will have a crew examine and will authorize work to make sure the level is correct to ensure proper flow. The Commission also asked that Frank have the cemetery crew clear out the vegetation in the depression. In the end the Commissioners voted to have Mike ask Fay Spofford and Thorndike recommend a method of retaining the holding/drainage capacity of the depression.

For November Special Town Meeting – To fulfill our wishes from spring of 2019 in which we were too late for the Annual Town Meeting warrant, Ellen will ask that an article appropriating funding for renovation of the two landscape circles at Highland Meadow and the Veterans’ area at Belmont Cemetery to replace the boxwood hedges that the staff had removed several years ago. In the latter spot, only dwarf shrubs and perennials should be utilized. This project will be funded using the Interest from the Perpetual Care Fund and an article must be placed on the warrant. To get to the correct estimate number, the Commission asked Mike Santoro to prepare some specs for distribution to several landscape companies, including local ones. Unanimous Vote

Fay Spofford & Thorndike – we reviewed the overall recommendations from the report Evaluation of Soil Conditions Highland Meadow Cemetery, dated October 2008 that led to the installation of the drain under the cemetery road. The Cemetery Commission had requested an updated review. We are interested in installing the monitoring wells as recommended. Unanimous vote we ask Mike Santoro to work with Glenn Clancy to



engage FST (now Stantec) to perform the updated monitoring well work. We will need the price for the work to include in our article for the November Special Town Meeting also to be funded by the Interest from the Perpetual Care Fund. Ellen will work with Mike and Frank to determine the specs. Unanimous vote to proceed.

Frank reminded the Board that we had previously requested that the Cemetery staff reserve the lots forming a desired path from the roadway to the wall separating the Meadow. Perhaps this pathway could be used for the monitoring wells.

Mike S and Frank then left the meeting at 8:45 AM

Ellen brought two new issues that have arisen:

1. She was contacted by a person who would like to have a marker for a family member added to a very old lot at Belmont Cemetery. Ellen explained the difficulty in the cemetery staff determining the relationship of the requestor to the lot owner. She said that she recently was requesting vital records in Connecticut, where only blood-relations may obtain copies of vital records. The requestor must supply a family tree that indicates the relationship to the person on the vital record. Ellen recommended that the Belmont Cemetery operation require the same for any requests for interment or markers that are not made by the owner of record for the lot/burial rights. Approved by Unanimous vote and Ellen will communicate with the staff.
2. The Belmont Day School border with Highland Meadow Cemetery and the Lone Tree Hill Conservation Land – Ellen asked Community Development if the border plants had been inspected and accepted after the construction of the Day School's Barn addition and new entrance roadway/drive. She was assured that the border complied with the drawings and requirements. She then contacted Lauren Meier of the Land Management Committee, a landscape architect, who reviewed and commented on the buffer plantings to the Planning Board, whose suggestions were incorporated into the approval. Lauren went to the buffer and inspected each of the plantings and found that many are dead, too small or etc and not doing the job of a visual buffer that was required. She has passed along her findings directly to Jeffrey Wheeler for the Planning Board asking that they get the Day School to make the necessary adjustments, additions, and improvements during the fall planting season. The Commissioners are concerned that the buffer is not thriving and serving to block the roadway traffic in any way and are grateful to Lauren for her assistance.

We will keep watch on this issue.



C. Adjournment

Chairman Ellen O'Brien Cushman adjourned the meeting at 9:02 AM.

Minutes submitted by: Alexander E. Corbett, III