

Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 15, 2024 at 1:00 PM
Conference Room #1, Town Hall, Chilmark

Attendance:

Commissioners present: Judie Flanders (Chair), Laurisa Rich, Matt Tobin
Other: Susan Murphy (Superintendent), Carolyn Stoeber (Administrator)

The meeting was called to order by Judie at 1:03 pm

The minutes were reviewed with a clarification of the issue in the cemetery being described as grave subsidence.

Action: A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from January 2, 2024 and February 8, 2024 as amended. Passed with one abstention. (Matt Tobin was not present for the meetings.)

Administration Report

- There were no new plot applications received.
- Correspondence:
 - Annual Report for 2023 final version
 - Thank you note to CPC signed and sent
 - Carolyn drafted a follow up letter to the eastern abutter at AHC, but Susan has spoken with Gary Mottau who has contact information for the family. Carolyn will ask Gary regarding a better contact for the abutters.
 - Carolyn has requested an email address: cemetery@chilmarkma.gov
- Digital conversion of cemetery data
 - Carolyn will contact the cemeteries of other towns on the island to propose a regional project to digitize in a standard way across the Island towns.
 - Laurisa has spoken to the superintendent in Tisbury in the past, so she will contact him to discuss whether this might be of interest.
- Carolyn will provide the budget vs actual spending before each meeting of the cemetery commission.

Superintendent Report

- There has been one burial this year so far, in January. It was a green burial.
- Susan spoke with Alan and Warren Gowell
 - They received the check for the initial 18 repairs.
 - There may not be another 15 – 18 easy repairs in the cemetery. They will be more complicated. Warren is especially interested in the more complicated solutions.
 - With the markers that cannot be repaired, what should be done? Remove and save the stone as is and put a facsimile in its place or a marker of some sort? Edgartown did some of this type of work that we can look at and see if this a direction to go in for AHC.
 - Susan will do a walkabout with Judie and the Gowells to discuss monument restoration going forward
 - A family with two full plots has maxed out the number of markers on their plots, but there is a boulder already there. Susan spoke with the Gowells about the possibility to using the existing boulder as a marker and carving into it directly.
- Susan spoke with Lenny who has not yet located the Veterans List. Susan also called the Veterans Agent and left a message for the list.
- Winter cleanup

- Susan contacted the newspaper columnists remind people to clean up graves.
- Susan got stakes from Patty Eagan to mark
- Carolyn will contact Keith Emin about plowing the driveway and parking lot at AHC, not the roads within the cemetery.
- A summer resident in Menemsha offered to digitize the maps in the past, but the issue was reconciled without his help when Jennifer Christy created digital maps.
- Grave subsidence will be looked at during the walkabout with Judie and Susan and the Gowells.
- Marshall Carroll complimented the commission at the budget hearing on how AHC is being maintained.

New Business

- Projects for FY 24
 - FY 24 is the first year that the cleanup will include the new section.
 - More tree clean up and chipping will happen in the spring.
 - The pine needles were raked this year and they will be on a schedule of every other year going forward.
 - Brush cutting can be done by Steve in the spring.
 - Gate repair/rebuilding and new gate can be completed.
 - Build out the projects based on what is left in the FY 24 budget and have a schedule of projects for FY 25 once the budget has been approved.
 - Susan will do a walkabout with Judie to look at projects.
 - Plans for the Eastern boundary in Founders include clearing and cleaning up the property boundary and installing split rail fencing consistent with the rest of the cemetery.
- Laurisa sent a photo of a 30 inch wreath using the perpetual care signs. They are made of galvanized-dipped steel, so they can be soldered. Each wreath is made of 12 signs. The number of wreaths that can be made will be dependent on the total number of signs. Laurisa will find out how many can be made and that will determine where they will be used.
- Laurisa previously sent the commissioners an article about the cemetery on Noman's Land that mentioned the historical responsibility was transferred to the Wampanoag Tribe in 1999. Though the article mentioned special interest in partnering with ecologically-focused groups, the commission discussed pursuing a visit to the island. There was interest in collaborating with the Historical commission if we are granted permission. The Department of Fish and Game accompany visitors to Noman's. The Chilmark Town records has quite a bit of information about Noman's, which Tim Rich reviewed as part of the tricentennial celebration.

Action: A motion was made, and seconded, to appoint Tim Rich as a representative of the Cemetery Commission and to begin the process of getting permission to visit Noman's Land, starting with the Tribe. Passed unanimously.

Tim Rich will be added to an agenda after he has been able to contact the Tribe with a report on how the process is progressing and information he has about Noman's Land.
- The Massachusetts Cemetery Association Meeting was postponed from Tuesday due to the snow storm and was held the day of the Cemetery Commission meeting, so Judie was not able to attend. Judie will acquire any materials and recordings of the meeting that are available.

Old Business

- Matt presented work so far on the Tree Replacement Plan, which will address planting, pruning, and removing trees. It will be a gradual process, but will take place over the entire cemetery rather than doing one area at a time.
 - Pine trees that drop needles are maintenance-heavy trees. Focus on removing the most mature pine trees that may be vulnerable to storms and pruning limbs to avoid damage.

Particular attention will be given when the pines are located close to markers and would cause damage.

- Replacement trees will be a mix of trees with a focus on native trees, but avoiding mono-culture. Care and cleanup of the trees will be considered. Matt is looking at medium-sized trees. Some suggested were:
 - Dogwood
 - Crab apple, without large fruit will not be a maintenance problem
 - Carolina snowbell
 - Stewartia, a four-season tree with blooms in July and August
 - Oxydendrum, or Lily of the Valley Tree
 - American Holly – could be along the Eastern property line, Judie has small plants that could be transplanted
 - Cryptomeria are deeply rooted and along with Umbrella Pines are evergreen and wind tolerant, but the base can become very wide, taking up an entire plot.
- Judie asked if some of the plots in Kings Way should be reserved for these medium-sized and larger trees to avoid sections of AHC only having small, decorative plantings.
- Bigger trees could be designated along the edges of the cemetery where there wouldn't be plot encroachment.
- Two species were suggested for plantings along South Road for noise abatement that would be resistant to deer and hearty with the road salting.
 - Boxwood
 - Andromeda
- Matt will do a walkabout with Susan, and maybe Tim Boland, with these ideas in mind and come up with the first phase of the Tree Replacement Plan to present in March.
- Information about the D/2 product found online was relayed to the group.
 - D/2 might be used to remove lichen on markers in AHC where the legibility of the stones is compromised. The Gowells will be asked about their experience with D/2.
 - Judie proposed a project to take photos and record information on the stones that are treated with D/2 while the stones are most legible.
 - Laurisa will contact the person she met who is a certified gravestone lichen remover and ask if she uses D/2.

Documents reviewed: Annual Report, Thank you note to CPC, draft letter to the abutter, photo of the proposed wreath using upcycled signs, information on D/2.

Next meeting: Matt's birthday, March 14, 2024, at 9am is the next meeting. His favorite cake is chocolate.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:56 pm.