

# Meeting of the Kensington Cemetery Trustees

Thursday, December 10, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.

## Minutes

*Draft minutes to be voted on during next meeting of the Kensington Cemetery Trustees.*

The meeting was held virtually using the Town's Zoom platform. The meeting was posted on the Town's website so the public was able to attend. Kathy Felch, Selectman's Assistant opened the meeting and passed hosting responsibilities to Jackie Benson. Jackie hosted the meeting with her email and phone so that anyone who called in or wished to join could have done so easily. Jackie read the Checklist to Ensure Meetings are Compliant with the Right-to-Know Law During the State of Emergency.

### **In Attendance**

#### *Present:*

Cemetery Trustees: Jackie Benson, Norm DeBoisbriand, Nancy Roffman

#### *Absent:*

None.

Call to order at 6:32 PM.

### **Minutes**

The trustees reviewed whether there were any prior meeting minutes to accept. None were presented.

### **Old Business**

None.

### **New Business**

#### 2020 Budget

- Fence repair: Nancy Roffman received a verbal estimate of \$5,000 for needed work on the Lower Yard fence. Nancy confirmed that Art will likely be willing to do the job. The trustees have asked for the full \$5,000 in the 2021 budget to cover this expense, as well as \$2,000 to repair the cemetery gate.
- Encumbering funds: The trustees noted there is \$1,270 unspent for fence maintenance in the 2020 budget. As the 2021 expenses have already been asked for in the 2021 budget, the trustees discussed that the \$1,270 might be encumbered for stone repair work. Jackie noted that several stones in the Lower Yard are broken, falling or listing. There are stones in need of

maintenance in the Upper Yard as well and it has been some years since stone repair work was done.

- Motion: Norm moved that Jackie get an estimate from a grave repair service for needed work on the stones and submit that to the Selectboard with a request to encumber the \$1,270 from 2020 for this work. Jackie seconded. A roll call vote was held.
  - Jackie: Aye
  - Norm: Aye
  - Nancy: Aye
- Landscaping: Jackie noted that the fall cleanup was done earlier than specified by the contract. The cleanup was done on 11/7 while the contract specifies that it should be done on the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of November. There was also a question raised about charges for November mowing on the recent invoice shared with the trustees by Kathy Felch. The cemetery contract specifies that mowing is to halt the last week of October. The trustees discussed recommending some changes to the cemetery landscaping contract to make requirements for fall cleanup more specific.
  - Motion: Jackie moved that Norm review the landscaping contract and make recommendations for changes, to be presented to the trustees at our next meeting. Following trustee approval, the changes would be submitted to the Selectboard. Norm seconded. A roll call vote was held.
    - Jackie: Aye
    - Norm: Aye
    - Nancy: Aye

#### 2021 Budget

- The trustees discussed the status of the 2021 budget. Norm noted that the Selectboard will likely invite the trustees to join a meeting where their budget request will be discussed. The trustees agreed no further action is needed on the 2021 budget request at this time.

#### Wreaths Across America

- The trustees noted that we are too late to participate in Wreaths Across America this year. Norm volunteered to spearhead investigating what would be involved in participating next year. He will report back to the trustees at the next meeting.

#### Cemetery Maintenance

- Flags on graves: The trustees discussed whether flags on graves needed to be removed for the winter and who was responsible for doing so. Norm recalled some controversy over the timing of removal of the flags communicated to him by former trustee Fred Bloomberg. Norm volunteered to connected with Fred to get more information about the objections raised. It was also clarified that the Kensington American Legion was responsible for putting up the flags.
  - Motion: Jackie moved that the trustees delegate Norm to contact Fred, assess the controversy over the flags, and if it seemed reasonable to move forward with their removal to contact the Legion and make arrangements. Norm seconded. A roll call vote was held.
    - Jackie: Aye
    - Norm: Aye

- Nancy: Aye
- Invasive species: Jackie noted she received a warning from a towns person that there is bittersweet growing in the cemetery. The other trustees requested more information. Jackie will reconnect with the citizen in question, get oriented with the invasives in the cemetery, and share pictures with specifics with the other trustees to inform Norm's work on the landscaping contract.
- Tree maintenance by the Unitarian Church: Norm shared that the trustees of the Universalist Church intend to do some work on trees behind the church. There is a question as to whether those trees are on cemetery/town or church land. Norm suggested that the trustees should involve themselves in those proceedings to ensure that the trees maintenance has minimal impact on the nearby graves, which are among the oldest in the Upper Yard. Jackie suggested that when she gets the grave repair services to come and assess the needed work on broken stones she also do a walk-through of this area of the Upper Yard with them and ask for their recommendations on what might need to be done to protect the old gravestones there during both the tree maintenance and the upcoming renovations to the church.
  - Motion: Norm moved that we have an assessment done of needed stone repair in the Upper and Lower Yards as well as an assessment of needed action to protect the graves and cemetery property during the upcoming renovations of the church. Nancy seconded. A roll call vote was held.
    - Jackie: Aye
    - Norm: Aye
    - Nancy: Aye
- Trash bin: Norm noticed a few boards are coming loose on the wooden trash bin in the Lower Yard. He suggested he go down with his screw gun and take care of the problem. The trustees were all fine with this solution.

#### Cemetery Records

- Jackie reported back on her search for the database of graves made a couple of decades ago by a wonderful band of volunteers. She noted that it appears the database was updated and converted to an Excel spreadsheet at some point, printouts of which are in the cemetery binder currently in her possession. She has been unable to locate an electronic copy of the file. Norm shared that he had a mystery CD in his cemetery binder which may have copies of the records. He will investigate the contents and report back. The trustees discussed the current state of cemetery record keeping, noting several possible areas of confusion or vulnerability in the records. The trustees agreed to work towards a more accessible and organized system of record-keeping which could be easily updated and shared in the future.
  - Motion: Jackie moved that the cemetery trustees create a gmail account with cloud storage, with access to that email and storage to be shared among the trustees as well as the town clerk and selectmens assistant. Norm seconded. A roll call vote was held.
    - Jackie: Aye
    - Norm: Aye
    - Nancy: Aye

## Bylaws

- The trustees discussed the lack of published cemetery bylaws. They agreed it was unclear whether any formal bylaws had ever been adopted for the cemetery. The trustees agreed that the lack of clear bylaws leads to confusion and difficulty for town residents trying to plan for end-of-life. The trustees agreed that there is a need for clear bylaws. A future meeting will be dedicated to brainstorming what form those bylaws should take, with a goal of developing a draft of bylaws which can be presented to the Selectboard for discussion and then to the public for comment.

## Abandoned Cemeteries

- Norm raised the issue of other small cemeteries in town which may be in an abandoned state. Nancy noted that at least one small cemetery in town is still actively maintained by the family. Jackie noted that a pair of slave graves by the intersection of North and Drinkwater Roads have apparently been lost. The trustees agreed that sometime next spring or summer a 'walking meeting' should be held to assess the condition of Kensington's small cemeteries and determine whether any of them constitute abandoned cemeteries. The trustees agree that abandoned cemeteries should be adopted and maintained by the town. Jackie also raised the issue of a need to survey all these smaller cemeteries to ensure that their locations are clearly known and that they can therefore be protected in the event of future development.

The next meeting of the trustees was set for February 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM.

Jackie called for the meeting to adjourn at 7:45 PM. Norm seconded. A roll call vote was held:

- Jackie: Aye
- Norm: Aye
- Nancy: Aye