

Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: September 19, 2024

Commissioners Present: Jennifer Diaz, Alexandra Millar, Mary Wesley (Martha Dallas not present)

Staff Present: Holli Bushnell, Cindi Wight, Kim Bleakley,

Others Present: Donna Laban, Kate,

Meeting was called to order 4:41pm at by Chair Jennifer Diaz

I. **Approval of Agenda**

Diaz moved to adopt the agenda, Mary Wesley moved to second, all were in favor

II. **Approval of minutes from 6/20/2024**

Diaz moved to approve the minutes, Nancy Kirby seconded, all were in favor

III. **Public Forum**

Public forum was opened at 4:43pm. Vicky Bezio, daughter of former commissioner Rita Church, was present to speak on behalf of her mother. On a recent visit to the cemetery their vehicle bottomed out multiple times on cemetery roads. They would like re-paving to be considered for the FY2025 budget. Public forum was closed at 4:50pm

IV. **Building Improvements**

Kim Bleakley, Central Facilities Manager, was on hand to discuss the ongoing renovations to the Lakeview office building and Louisa Howard Chapel. In the last year an RFP was issued for the exterior renovation on office and chapel. The chapel work included slate roof cleaning and repair, exterior painting on trim and doors, repair of the railing out front, repointing of outside of building to help prevent future water damage, and, most importantly, removing lexan cover from leaded glass windows. When the lexan was removed, they discovered that each window was framed with foam and contained tubing to drain water. They also discovered that wood rot was present. The wood rot has been repaired and checked by a specialist architect who is very happy with the outcome. The windows are stunningly beautiful with light coming through. The circle window is the only remaining leaded glass window that needs to have the lexan removed. This final removal will complete the external renovation.



Diaz felt the building looks amazing, and shared that she is delighted every time she drives by. Bleakley asked if Diaz was talking about the Chapel or the caretaker's house, and Diaz confirmed that she was talking about the office. Bleakley then shared that the only work remaining on the office/caretaker's house is rebuilding accessible ramp. Diaz added that she's so happy to see Victorian touches returned and highlighted. Cindi Wight added that contractor Eric Guilford did an amazing job. Bleakley agreed that Guilford did an amazing job. She added that he also did some work on the lighting to help keep mounting invisible. This enables the lights to be directed upward without being visible.

At this time lighting designer Donna Laban spoke about the Friends of Lakeview Cemetery chapel lighting project. This project started prior to the 2020 lockdown and has recently been completed. The work highlighted the structural beauty of the space, especially the beams. It was a labor of love to do work in the chapel. Everyone wanted lighting on the raised podium for safety. Low voltage lights were added along the ceiling to help highlight the gold stenciling. LEDs near ceiling are also dust protected so that they will not diminish. Ultimately, Laban and the Friends are very pleased with the mix of lower wattage LEDs and the addition of a few new switches. Everything worked out beautifully. They added approximately twice what was there previously in terms of light in the space. They replaced the sconces in addition to adding spots along roofline and in altar area. Almost everything that was originally planned was executed with the exception of replacing the pendant lamps (which folks agreed were appropriate). The left over funds will be used for exterior lighting.

Wight added that the donors for the project were very happy. BPRW is getting quotes for clear panels on outside of windows to protect the leaded glass from vandalism, and that has already been funded by donor. Donor funds are also available to repair cracks in the walls and other wear and tear. Donors are ready to stand up for the space which is extremely encouraging.

Alexandra Millar added that she would like to find a way to have story show up in wider BTV media space. So many people would be excited to hear about work of love and care. She shared that she would be happy to facilitate. Wight concurred that it would be great to do an actual press event on building. Millar and Wesley may team up to draft a press release and publicize further.

V. Grow Wild Improvements

Kate Kruesi from Grow Wild Vermont shared that for the last couple of years her organization has been working to develop more wildlife corridors through cemetery. They worked with Paul and Steve to see what would add more ecological function in places that are the hardest to care for. Initiative Grow Wild (parts of Wildways) has been instrumental in making those changes.



Kruesi's organization is trying to be an educational resource for folks who want to create habitats with native plants out of their lawns. Lakeview is a demonstrative site which is what most people want to see. It might look messy (no mow slopes, woody species, spreading shrub thickets), but that's how we move forward with no and low mow spaces. The low and no mow programs were started in 2022. This year Grow Wild is adding more low mow areas, not shrub thickets (including site right behind chapel), but wild grasses kept long. It will continue to look better year after year, as seeds and plantings spread. Next Monday, 9/23, they'll be planting the whole bank from the steps by the old vault all the way over to the chapel. This area will only need to be mown every other year with brush hog. On 9/23 they will be planting meadow islands to get started, and those plants will spread and seed over the next couple of years. This has the potential to keep staff from having to weedwhack all summer.

Wesley asked if the plants being installed are native, and Kruesi confirmed that they are with the exception of wild petunia which is labeled clearly. It adds color and pollinator support, but everything else is native and most were actually already on the site and were just getting mowed down. Grow Wild is attempting to retrain the public to see lawns as what they could be. multi-colored, multi-dimensional spaces.

VI. Staff Updates

In the interest of time, Bushnell did not have any updates.

VII. Commissioner Updates

In the interest of time, No commissioners had any updates.

VIII. Adjournment

Diaz moved to adjourn, Kirby seconded, and all were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 5:22pm. The next meeting will be held June 20, 2024 at 4:30pm, at a location TBD.