

Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: April 3, 2025

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

Staff Present: Holli Bushnell, Cindi Wight, Steve Bachand,

Meeting was called to order 4:48pm at by Vice Chair Alexandra Millar

I. Approval of Agenda

Millar moved to adopt the agenda, Nancy Kirby moved to second, all were in favor

II. Approval of minutes from 2/20/2025

Mary Wesley moved to approve the minutes, Millar seconded, all were in favor

III. Public Forum

Public forum was opened at 4:49pm, as no one was present or wished to speak, public forum was also closed at 4:49pm

IV. Winter Casket Vault Storage Pricing

Steve Bachand, Cemetery and Grounds Manager for BPRW, shared that we currently have an overly complicated pricing system for storing caskets over the winter. For the first 30 days there is a base price of \$100. After that, if the casket is removed within the first 15 days of the month an additional \$25 is added to the total. If the casket is not removed until the second half of the month, an additional \$50 is added to the total. These rates are in effect all winter until July 1. After July 1 there is a \$50 per day charge for casket storage. This confuses everyone – staff, funeral homes, families. While we do burials all year round, most cemeteries in Vermont do not. Besides a storage facility in Richmond, we are the only place to store caskets in the area. The way the Richmond facility handles their pricing is \$300 for the full winter or \$150 after March 1.

Cindi Wight asked how many caskets we can store. Bachand said we can store upwards of 40 caskets. Cindi asked if there is ever a space issue for casket storage. Steve shared that when he first started we used to have to be overflowing with casket storage. Now that burials have shifted from mostly casket to mostly cremation, we hardly fill half the vault these days.



The group reviewed old invoices for casket storage and it was clear that the new pricing would both be easier and potentially increase revenue.

Kirby asked how the vault storage process worked. Bachand explained that we usually start receiving caskets around the end of November or beginning of December. We hold the caskets over the winter and most families try to have burials happen as soon as it's possible to get into the ground. The funeral homes take care of transportation. There is no charge for casket storage if a burial is going to take place at Lakeview. We would continue to honor the no-charge policy to lot owners at Lakeview.

Millar asked if we advertise casket storage as a perk of owning a lot at Lakeview. Bachand explained that we'd rather do burials as soon as possible, we'd rather not hold caskets. Holli Bushnell pointed out that making the rates the same would just make things easier for everyone.

Kirby moved to change the vault pricing to \$300 for the year or \$150 after March 1. This would go into effect of the next season. Breaking down the details, it would be \$300 from November 1 to June 30 or \$150 from March 1 through June 30. The \$50 a day would remain in effect after July 1. Mary Seconded the motion and all were in favor.

V. Infant Lot Rates

Bachand explained that there is a discrepancy between the lot price in section 4baby and the half lot price in the Muslim section (also for babies). Lots in 4baby are \$282 for residents or \$396 for non-residents. These lots are 2 1/2' by 5'. Half graves in the Muslim section are \$566 for residents or \$901 for non-residents and the size is 3 1/2' by 10'. The graves are essentially the same size, but the pricing is very different for each sections. Bachand, understandably, does not feel good about charging Muslims more. He asked the commission if they'd rather raise the prices in section 4 or lower the prices in the Muslim section.

Kirby asked if the interment fee is different in the Muslim section versus the baby section. The interment fee stays the same.

Millar asked if we raised the baby rates in our last round of pricing increases. We did not increase the lot fees in 2023 but we did add the 3% in 2025. It was originally \$250 and \$370. The rates are now \$282 and \$396. Millar asked if this would set precedent in other areas of the cemetery. Wight shared that we could use square footage to justify as price difference, but not one as large as what currently exists.



Jennifer Diaz asked if there is a regulation size for an infant lot. Bachand explained that it comes down to the age of the individual. Diaz continued by asking if it would be possible to do 3 burials in 1 Muslim lot. Bachand shared that, unfortunately, it is not.

Millar asked if there is any precedent for infant burial in other parts of the cemetery. Bushnell explained that we have buried infants all over the cemetery and there are a couple of other areas dedicated to infant burial. That said, if a family has a loss of an infant and does not already have a family lot at Lakeview, the only place they can purchase is in Section 4baby.

Diaz asked if Bachand had a suggestion as to what would be the best course of action, raising the baby prices or lowering the Muslim prices. Bachand explained that the infant lot prices are so low because of the incredible tragedy of losing a baby. The business part of him knows charging the higher rates is more economically intelligent, but the human part of him would like to show kindness. Bushnell added that a lot of the baby lot purchasers are often already struggling with huge medical bills from the infant they lost and they are relieved when they find out the price is so low.

Bachand asked for a motion to keep the infant lot prices in section 4baby and apply that price to half lots in the Muslim section for infants.

Diaz moved that all infant lots in Section 4baby and half lots in the Muslim section be priced at the Section 4baby price rates. Kirby seconded, all were in favor.

VI. Perpetual Care Fund Interest Request

Cindi Wight reiterated the yearly request to use the interest from the perpetual care fund (\$25,000) to be used towards seasonal salaries in the FY 26 budget.

Millar moved to approve, Kirby seconded, all were in favor. Bachand shared his gratitude for the commission making sure we'll be well staffed for the summer.

As a side note, Wight reiterated her hope that a commissioner would step up to take interest in improving the investments of the Perpetual Care Fund. Millar suggested looking back at the green burial sub-committee work to see if there was someone involved with that would might be interested. Diaz asked if the person would have to be a commissioner or if they could just be an interested volunteer. It could conceivably be a volunteer who reports back to the commission.

VII. Staff/Director Updates



Bushnell reiterated that Martha Dallas is not able to attend meetings at the regularly scheduled date and time. Bushnell will share the days Dallas is available with the rest of the commission. She did an inventory of the American flags on hand for veterans graves and discovered that we're only about 100 flags short of being able to replace all of the flags on veterans' graves. Additionally, lot card entry continues and Bushnell has completed through GAU. Finally, there is a need for a gutter on the porch roof and an issue with rainwater pooling in front of the door. Wight suggested that Bachand flag the roof/gutter/pooling issue with Kim Bleakley.

Wight shared that the storm water storage tank project might actual happen this year. An MOU has been put out and hopefully it will be starting this summer. The whole reason we're waiting for the final work on the porch is because of the storage tanks.

VIII. Commissioner Items

Kirby shared her frustration with people in her neighborhood regularly using Greenmount as a dog park. There is a no dog policy in the cemetery, there is signage everywhere, and she's getting really frustrated. Bachand suggested adding more no dog signage, but the problem is policing Greenmount. It's really hard to enforce the rule 24 hours a day. We have to hope people are respectful. Steve did share that he could add additional no dog signs that he purchased for the tennis courts. Wight shared that it's hard, but locking it up is not the answer. Wight asked if there was a regular time that these people come through. Kirby shared that it's at 8:30am every morning. Bachand and Wight suggested that Neil or Jake (our urban park rangers) swing by when the perpetrators are there and let them know what the rules are.

Millar shared that she is hoping to make a plan for the year ahead. She would like to know what the cemetery is going to be working on over the next year so the commission can better support the goals of staff and administration. Bachand shared that the biggest thing coming up this year is Section 8. Paul Morris reached out to the firm that originally designed section 5, shared our wishes, and they are in the process of developing the final design. A big part of the development of the section involves both storm water run-off, accommodating the Muslim community with a designated area, and creating space for green burials. The goal is to put as many graves in the section as possible. There will likely be some changes, but the plan will be shared with the commission as soon as it's ready.

Mary Wesley asked if the commission should start the process of changing the ordinance to allow green burial in green burial lots now as opposed to waiting until section 8 is completed. Bachand agreed that getting the ordinance updated while the section is being worked on is a good idea. Wight brought up the idea of selling green burial lots only to residents. Bushnell was enthusiastic about this as there are other area cemeteries that offer green burials. Bachand



added that the new Muslim graves will be entirely prepared for green burials at their request. That said, there is a question as to what happens to the graves in the current Muslim section that won't allow green burial? Will they ever sell? The president of the Islamic society assured us they would still use them, but Bachand has his doubts. Wight suggested Millar and Wesley start working on the ordinance change again as they were part of the green burial sub-committee. The first step will be creating a draft of language to send to Bachand. Bachand concluded by sharing that there is no clear timeline for section 8 development. It's unlikely to be completed in 2025, but hopefully 2026.

Millar asked for clarity on when the terms of everyone on the commission are up. Bushnell will send that information. Millar and Diaz's terms conclude this year, Wesley and Martha Dallas are up in 2026 and Kirby in 2027.

IX. Adjournment

Diaz moved to adjourn, Kirby seconded, and all were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 6:30pm. The next meeting will be held on 5/15/2025 at 4:30pm at the Lakeview Office.