

Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: January 15, 2026

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

Staff Present: Holli Bushnell, Steve Bachand, Phil Lewis

Meeting was called to order 4:36pm 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 6/23/2025

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

III. Public Forum

Public forum was opened at 4:37pm, as no one was present or wished to speak, public forum was also closed at 4:37pm

IV. Departmental Update

Steve Bachand shared the draft drawing for section 8. It shows the new proposed areas in conjunction to section 5, the existing Muslim section, and the triangle. One thing the current draft does not show is the green burial graves allocated for a new Muslim section. At present the draft shows them at 3' ½ by 10', the size of a grave for standard burial, but the Islamic Society has elected to use green burial in their new area which will reduce the number of graves. Bachand reminded the commission that our current compromise for the Muslim community is a hybrid green burial that uses a vault with holes, no embalming, and a board and shroud as containment. This hybrid style can use standard size graves. The map will have to be adjusted to accommodate the larger size lots needed for true green burial in the new Muslim section. There are additional green burial lots for the public also included in the plan. Any green burial lot will be 5'x12' which is the general consensus regarding the size needed to do green burials safely. There are 167 proposed green burial lots for the public. The plan currently includes a scatter garden. The triangle will be cremation/urn only and would only allow for flat markers. There will be some urn only lots included in what is otherwise full burial sections to maximize space. There are columbariums proposed for future phases. Bachand has met with Sophie Sauve, the head of the planning team. A date for breaking ground is, unfortunately, still



unclear. The good news is that we may be able to establish green burials sooner because that ground has already been leveled and prepared for burials. All that still needs to happen in that area is for the designers to come in and pin everything, laying the lots out.

Diaz asked if the leveling work can be done at any time, and Bachand explained that it can, but it's more likely to be done in warmer months.

Alexandra Millar asked to confirm the number of public green burial lots and Bachand reiterated that it will be 167 lots. Millar asked if the Muslims are comfortable having fewer lots allocated for them if they are able to offer fully green burials, and Bachand confirmed that he has met with the president of the Islamic Society, and they would like to know how many lots of their current 148 they will lose if they choose to have green burial lots. It seems like that it's worth it to them. Millar shared that she is glad to see so many trees included in the plan. She is also wondering what features could be included regarding native plantings or to wildlife support as the section is developed.

Martha Dallas shared that she is excited to see this first round of drawings. She asked if the draft could be shared with commission so she could look at it in greater detail. Bachand confirmed that he will email the draft to the commissioners.

Returning to green burial, Millar felt that, regardless of when it's happening, at some point the commission should circle back to the green burial sub-committee. Millar also wondered when commissioners can we let community know that green burial is in the works. Bachand was unsure when to release the information. He feels that we should probably wait until both the plans for development and green burial procedures are finalized. He is hesitant to put anything out to the public before there are concrete answers in place for their potential questions. It could be within the year or it could be longer; it depends on getting the plans back from the architect and getting everything signed off on. We're not currently ready, but it won't be that long.

Martha Dallas suggested reconvening the green burial sub-committee or having the commission put together a sequence of actions that need to take place before green burials can happen. She feels this might be helpful to do something public where the community can ask questions. Community input could inform how we plan and prepare.

Bachand shared that he welcomes community input. He suggested getting commissioners thoughts at the next meeting. He has been meeting with Paul Morris, cemetery working foreman, frequently regarding guidelines and rules. Bachand did admit that he is a little nervous to bring the public in and asked for input from new BPRW director Phil Lewis.

Lewis suggested doing an open-house style event to show the next phase of the cemetery to keep things low-key. The public could provide feedback through the city website. Lewis suggested including the draft and information on the BPRW project page, and when it's appropriate to share finished doc, include that as well.

Bachand reiterated that he would like to get commissioner feedback at next month's meeting.



Diaz asked if this draft of plans is basically finalized. This project has been in the works for so long, and she is concerned that we're at the finish line, but now we're considering opening ourselves up to processes that might push the timeline back again. She wants to make sure people are clear that this is a presentation of a completed plan, not something that public input will have an impact on. Bachand agreed, sharing that every time we send it the draft back to the architects it prolongs the process. It also costs more money every time we make revisions. We're chewing away at our budget every time it goes back to the architects.

Dallas shared that she wasn't thinking the public would question the plans. Rather, she thought the public meeting would be mostly about green burial. Diaz agreed, reiterating that she wants to make sure people aren't thinking they have a chance to change things the plans.

Millar wondered what the commission should be asking from the public and what are we hoping to get from them. Diaz reiterated her concern that she doesn't want the commission and staff to end up in a position where the public doesn't feel good about what we're planning.

Holli Bushnell suggested that the commissioners come up with questions for next meeting. While Bachand works with Sophie Sauve on the public comment side of things.

Wesley reminded the group that the ordinance change needs to happen before any green burial can happen, and drafting the language is an important first step. She shared that she just emailed the existing language developed by the green burial sub-committee to Bachand and lawyer Hayley McClenahan. She suggested adding the ordinance change language to next month's agenda too. Bachand agreed and will reach out to Hayley. He added that Lewis will need to step in and help out as well.

Lewis thanked the commission for the invite and for serving the community. He is on week six on the job and is still learning about everything the department does. He's originally from Portland, OR but has been in California for the last six or seven years. This is his first time on east coast and he admits that he was not prepared for a true Vermont winter. He has worked at director level positions for about 12 years. He has managed cemeteries before, but he is glad to have Steve and Paul to provide greater detail. He is a big proponent of maximizing resources in all areas, cemeteries included (low mow, storm water, etc...). Has not visited Greenmount or Elmwood yet, but is looking forward to checking them out. Hopes commission will reach out with anything they need, and he's happy to help however he can.

V. Commissioner Items

Millar asked if there had been any conversation around Elmwood usage by the proposed memory care facility. Bachand shared that, for so many reasons, it's just not a good idea. It's so old, there are so many voids and depressions, and we don't want add another gate. If people occasionally want to visit Elmwood that's fine, but it shouldn't be a regular thing. It's just way too big of a liability.



Millar shared that she would love to have a year ahead chat with Lewis at some point. Maybe next meeting? Wesley agreed with Millar. She also asked to get clarification on adding items to upcoming agendas. Lewis offered to have a standing meeting with the chair and vice chair to go over meeting and new items.

Diaz asked for suggested items to be included on the agenda even if there's no update. Millar shared that she would love to take Lewis up on his offer. Lewis shared that he will work with Staff to figure out.

VI. Adjournment

Diaz moved to adjourn, Mary seconds, all were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 5:27pm. The next meeting will be held on February 19, 2025 at the Lakeview cemetery office and via zoom.