

## Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes

**Meeting Date:** June 18, 2026

**Commissioners Present:** Jennifer Diaz, Martha Dallas, Nancy Kirby, Alexandra Millar-House, Mary Wesley

**Staff Present:** Holli Bushnell, Steve Bachand, Hayley McClenahan

Meeting was called to order 4:34pm at by Chair Jennifer Diaz

### I. **Approval of Agenda**

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

### II. **Approval of minutes from 5/21/2026**

Diaz moved, Millar asked that the last sentence of the section 8 section be changed to the following: So we could move forward either way with the proposed section 8 design without needing an additional concept drawing.”, Diaz moved to adopt the minutes as amended, Martha Dallas and Millar 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. **New Policy – Burial Procedure**

Steve Bachand shared that there is no update on the new burial procedure policy. The work is still in progress and it’s going to be a work in progress for likely months. Bachand also shared that a decision has come through regarding one of our legal matters. He asked City Attorney Hayley McClenahan to share what happened regarding the legal matter that lead us to work on the burial policy. Millar asked why this language is happening and what’s needed.

Essentially, we had a matter where the original lot owners were buried here back in the 1900s. When this happens, the burial rights are passed to any and all descendants and permission is required from all regarding future burials. There are 4 children in this particular family, and one has passed away. The remaining 3 siblings were not in agreement about letting the 4th sibling be buried in the lot. This legal matter prompted us to develop the language.

McClenahan shared that the draft policy is intended to be a guiding document for the city when there is a dispute amongst family members who all can claim ownership. The policy intends to



fill that gap and give staff guidelines as to what to do. There must be 100% agreement. If we don't have that, the policy makes next steps clear. It's a guiding framework for how we respond when there is a lot of cooks in the kitchen and a difference of opinion. McClenahan stated that she would be happy to answer legal questions. Office assistant Holli Bushnell added that this is actually legal precedent. She had previously asked a cemetery expert from the state and he was not able to give her a clear answer regarding multigenerational ownership. Millar thought that the language provided to the commission states that if there is any doubt on the part of the cemetery superintendent, applicants may be required to follow additional processes. What does that require? Is it the superintendent's job to be on top of those things? What happens if we miss something? McClenahan thought that missing something would be possible even with the new policy. That said, the point of the policy is to show the amount of due diligence required in one of these situations. It requires that staff take reasonable steps, not do a deep dive on ancestry. For example – if we have someone coming in who wants to do a burial but has an estranged sibling, this doc would provide guidelines as to what to do next. Diaz confirmed that the thought was getting everyone's consent, and without consensus there could be no burial. Diaz was not comfortable with this. She pointed out that people can be estranged or have control issues. Her thought was that whoever has power of attorney should be the point person or decider. Diaz felt that, if there's discord in the family, a solution might be working with POA.

Bachand explained that we've always requested that all family members agree to burial. In this instance there was some miswording that lead to things going further than they should have without agreement. We've never had this issue before because we've always asked for agreement. It is good that this is the first time something like this has happened. In the past people have either agreed or made separate arrangements.

V. **Section 8 Update**

Bachand shared that he spoke with Parks comprehensive planner Sophie Sauve a few hours before the meeting. There are still amendments being made with the design firm regarding road width and the potential Muslim section. Bachand asked the commissioners if they felt comfortable voting to approve the section plan at this meeting.

Millar stated she did not feel comfortable voting without a firm plan.

Dallas asked if there is an urgency for commissioners to look at current drawings, considering they're likely going to change. Bachand did feel that looking at the current drawings would still be helpful. The general concept is still there, but there might be detail changes. For example, the road width is not accurate, there are no funds for a new columbarium, and it is unclear if the Islamic Society wants regular or green graves. There is going to be another meeting with the Islamic society and it's going to take more time.

Millar asked if Bachand can email a PDF. Bachand will check, but he should be able to send it.



Millar also asked if there had been a determination regarding the legality of another Muslim only section. McClenahan doesn't have any formal information, but she has looked at this a little bit. The Islamic Society of Vermont has been a partner of the cemetery for a long time, and the city recognizes that. The issue is that we're a public, government owned cemetery. We can't discriminate against anyone for any reason. There are no issues moving forward with their wishes, however, if someone who is not a member of the society wants to purchase lots in that area, anyone can be buried there. We can design the area with their preferences in mind, but anyone would be able to purchase there.

Diaz asked if the Islamic society have an issue with people not of the faith being buried there. Bachand confirmed that they 100% emphatically do not want people of other faith's to be buried with them. It is basically forbidden by their religion to have a non-muslim person buried with them. We did an interment in the past of someone who was not 100% truly Islamic and when the society found out it was a huge problem. Currently, people who want to be buried in the Muslim section need to get permission from the Imam in advance.

Millar asked if the Islamic Society could pre-purchase the lots the way Temple Sinai did. Then they can decide to do whatever they want. Bushnell confirmed that Temple Sinai has 2 sections that they purchased for themselves as did Nepali Calvary Church. Millar shared that it sounds like purchasing is the way to ensure those spaces stay available to specific groups.

Bachand cautioned that this matter is just going to get super tricky. In new section, with proposed Muslim section facing Mecca, if these lots become green burials they don't get to select the location. With all green burials, people are purchasing the rights to burial but not a particular grave. That's the policy that will be coming to commissioners.

Dallas felt that cart blanch reserving a section for just one faith doesn't make sense. It's not good policy. There are faith communities who have their own cemeteries and do their own thing. ISVT may be faced to decide regarding what matters to them more.

Bachand shared that he has been recommending to ISVT for more than a year that they purchase their own land. They ask us to add more graves for them every year, and we keep squeaking in a few more. Bachand is aware that ISVT may be looking at land in Winooski. We would want to put restrictions on grave purchases. For example, we are proposing a 2-grave maximum purchase in the green section.

Millar attempted to summarize, stating we're waiting for more info and some design changes before we vote. Bachand confirmed this. He added that we are also waiting on ISTV to make a decision. He will reach out and let ISVT know what we're proposing (green lots offered to general public). McClenahan added that she will discuss appropriate language and ways to solve this issue following the meeting. Diaz asked for clarification if we are talking about doing away entirely with the Islamic section or only if it's green burials? Bachand explained that we've had this long-standing agreement with holding lots. We don't do this for anyone else. There aren't other religious groups that don't allow other faiths to be buried with them. If something legal



were to come out of this regarding our long standing policy, there is a question if we could still keep an Islamic section that wasn't green burials. McClenahan would like to follow up in an email after digging in a little further. Bachand confirmed that we need to be cautious about if we do allow ISTV to purchase bulk graves. If we allow them to do so, we'll have to allow bulk graves to everyone. Millar asked if is the idea with section 8 regular graves to also limit bulk purchases, and Bachand confirmed it is not. Millar asked if ISVT could bulk purchase regular size graves, and Bachand confirmed that they could.

**VI. Section 8 plan –**

The vote on the Section 8 plan was postponed to a future meeting

**VII. Green Burials -**

Policy Development – This was already discussed. There are no additional updates from the last meeting.

Dallas asked of staff have looked at other policies from other cemeteries. Bachand shared that we have looked at the policies from over 30 other cemeteries in addition to having staff visit two Vermont cemeteries offering green burial. We are definitely not reinventing the wheel. We actually learned a lot of things regarding lowering devices and other techniques. Even in current policy there's stuff to be updated. We fully realize that this policy is probably going to be a living document, constantly changing. Dallas cautioned that we don't let perfection be the enemy of good. Wesley was encouraged to hear the updates.

Ordinance language status – McClenahan took language provided by Mary and ran with it. She sent a draft to Bachand and the parks team. Overall, the language is pretty basic which is good. The next step is, once there is agreement on the commission, we vote to move to city council. McClenahan shared the draft of the ordinance language.

Bachand asked if McClenahan is recommending that we add rules and regulations of section to the ordinances. McClenahan confirmed that that was not the case. We could just say that a natural burial is exempt from vault requirement and then deal with new policy separately. That said, it's usually more efficient to send all changes at once rather than do piecemeal. If it's not in the ordinance and the City Council hasn't authorized the commission to authorize a new green area, then only the City Council can make those decisions. Bachand asked if the City Council have to approve green burials and new area. McClenahan felt she needed to do more research, but it does look like the City Council has to delegate authority to the Cemetery Commission to approve new area and green burials. The commission can do all the heavy lifting, but the City Council must give final approval.

Wesley felt that having McClenahan present to answer questions was super helpful. She would love to see draft of ordinance changes. Bachand confirmed he will send them out. McClenahan felt that everything will be clearer for commissioners with draft in front of them. The City



Council will be empowering commissioners to designate areas. McClenahan asked the commissioners to please send proposed edits and questions to her via email. She will have new draft for the next meeting.

**VIII. Cambrian Rise Stormwater status update –**

Bachand reports that there has been a contractor at the office who has been trying to finish up the ramp. There was some confusion between contractor and designer. Things are moving forward with exterior design work at the Lakeview office. There is no update as to when the infrastructure work is going to begin, but some work has started again. Things are moving at a snails pace, but they are moving. The current ramp is not complete.

**IX. Summer Commission meeting schedule –**

Typically the commission does not meet in July and August. Diaz would like to continue the July and August hiatus but continue planning meetings. Bachand feels this is a great chance to pause and give us a chance to catch up with all the projects we're working on. We should have updates for everything in September. Dallas was eager to see the draft language and map. She asked if it was OK to reply to these emails with comments and questions. Bachand asked her to make separate notes to be discussed at future meeting

**X. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:15pm. The next meeting will be in either August or September.