



BURLINGTON
**PARKS
RECREATION
WATERFRONT**
Cemetery Division

Cemetery Commission Meeting Agenda – REVISED AT MEETING

August 13, 2015, 4:30 PM

Lakeview Cemetery, 455 North Avenue

- I. Approval of Agenda—**REVISED AS NOTED IN BOLD:**
- II. Approval of Minutes from July 9, 2015 Meeting – **POSTPONE**
- III. **Schedule next Commission Meeting for September 10, 2015**
- IV. Old Business-- **actually NEW BUSINESS**
 - A. Consideration of City Council Resolution to discontinue Cemetery Commission as an entity separate from the Parks Commission—**add: Superintendent to participate with Commission.**
- V. Superintendent's Items
 - A. Report on land purchase for addition to waterfront park.
- VI. Commissioner's Items--**POSTPONE**
- VII. Office Report--**POSTPONE**
 - A. Request from staff for Commission approval of mausoleum site.
- VIII. Adjournment

History of Cemetery Commissions and Commissioners:

In 1863, the Vermont Legislature passed an act providing that public burial grounds might be put under the control of commissioners rather than a selectboard (known to us today as Councilors) if so voted by the town.

In 1864, the "town" of Burlington voted yes for commissioners and a cemetery commission, with commissioners elected by the voters.

Lawrence Barnes, F M Van Sicklen, T H Canfield, G G Benedict, and Samuel Huntington were elected the first commissioners. The commissioners were described as conservative in their management and faithful to their trust of maintaining the burial grounds of loved ones. They have, with limited means at their disposal, succeeded in giving outward expression to the feeling of respect and loving memory which our citizens hold to those who have passed away.

Of important note is the twelve year service of another commissioner, Captain Dan Lyon, whom for twelve years had practically entire charge of laying out and beautifying Lakeview Cemetery and improving Elmwood.

This information has been taken from the Annual Report for the City of Burlington, published in 1890 and available with Google Books online.

The question I googled was how long have cemetery commissions existed in Burlington, VT? It is clear the commissioners dedicated themselves to the care and management of the cemeteries in VT. In some ways, we have let our early commissioners down because we are not taking heartfelt care of our cemeteries as was mandated in those early years by the individuals and groups that donated money to the cemeteries.

Volunteerism has been a strong feature with Vermonters for decades, centuries. Volunteers give of their time, energy, and effort for what is valued, appreciated, and loved.

The current commissioners feel the same passion and responsibility for our cemeteries as our first commissioners felt. We give freely of our time, and we currently meet only four times a year with special meetings scheduled when appropriate. Meetings usually last an hour and a half. Where does the efficiency factor come in?

Our Mayor applauds citizen participation and involvement. So do the commissioners!

The cemeteries are consecrated land in our cities. We do not fit under Park and Rec. we know there is not a firm plan if the resolution passes. What we have now works. I reiterate, we are talking four meetings a year. The Commission also benefits from the historical knowledge and information about our cemeteries that Annie Dalton shares at our meetings. How will this beneficial knowledge continue to be shared?

We can't afford to have our cemeteries floundering without a commission (that oversees their destiny and protects them). Don't forget 1863 was the year the Vt Legislature passed the act to exercise the option of establishing the cemetery commissions. Burlington voted yes in 1864 to do just that! 1863-2015 surely is a passage of many years! Commissions have not been absolved for many years! That in itself is a powerful statement.

So the questions come up..

Who will walk through our cemeteries and be cognizant of broken fences, toppled statuary, vandalism.

Who will stand up for tree events be located not in Lakeview?

Who will be vocal and question why repairs have not taken place?

Who will think long range and approve continual care for the cemeteries?

Who will lovingly walk the grounds of our cemeteries

Cemetery Commission Meeting

Meeting Date: August 13, 2015

Commissioners Present: Rita Church, Allison Curran, Lainey Rappaport, Barry Trutor, Donna Waldron

Staff Present: Jesse Bridges, Parks and Recreation Department Head
Anne D’Alton, Cemetery Office Assistant

Attachments: Chittenden County Cemeteries – Lot Pricing for Residents & Non-Residents

The meeting was called to order by Donna Waldron at 4:30 pm, and she introduced and welcomed new commissioner, Allison Curran, who replaced Jane Ewing.

I. Approval of Agenda

- A. Barry Trutor proposed a revised agenda; Lainey Rappaport seconded; all in favor.
- B. Jesse Bridges proposed addition to agenda; agenda revision motion amended; all in favor.

II. Approval of Minutes from July 9, 2015 Meeting postponed.

III. Next Commission Meeting: September 10, 2015.

- A. Later, via email, date was changed to September 17, 2015 at 3:00 at the Cemetery Office.

IV. New Business

- A. Consideration of City Council Resolution to discontinue Cemetery Commission as an entity separate from the Parks Commission, Superintendent to participate with Commission.
 - ◆ Waldron phoned City Councilor Joan Shannon about the above resolution. Shannon said the Council had had no clear discussion on how to eliminate the Cemetery Commission while retaining representation for the City-owned Cemeteries. She suggested Nancy Kaplan, chair of the Parks Commission, should be involved in any discussion of this plan.
 - Shannon had suggested adding another Parks Commissioner, but Waldron pointed out that the Parks Commission already has many issues to discuss at their meetings, so it does not seem reasonable for them or for the interest of the Cemeteries to transfer the responsibility of covering Cemeteries to them.
 - Shannon had wondered if the Friends could take over the role of Commission—not appropriate, as they have different mission and some members are not Burlington residents.
 - Having the Cemetery Office Assistant present at Cemetery Commission meeting is very helpful.
 - Gino Sullivan, who was involved with formation of the Muslim Section at Lakeview Cemetery, will speak to Shannon.
 - Waldron plans to invite Councilor Shannon to a Cemetery Commission meeting.
 - Waldron handed out 2-page document describing her research: History of cemetery Commissions and Commissioners (attached). Her conclusion is that without a



Cemetery Commission, there would be no one responsible for advocating for maintaining the care, mission and purpose of the City's Cemeteries.

- ◆ Trutor noted that he had maintained the strong opposition he expressed at the August 9, 2015 Commission meeting.
- ◆ Rita Church read her statement concerning the issue:
 - Many people have given much of their time and effort to volunteer for the City, giving back to their community. Eliminating the opportunity for Cemetery Commissioners to contribute in this manner is a “slap in the face”.
 - The people who built the City of Burlington, who worked & died here, are buried in City Cemeteries, and the City owes them the respect of responsible oversight of the Cemeteries.
 - The Friends of Lakeview Cemetery have raised a lot of money to restore Cemetery features. Eliminating volunteers eliminates the potential for this support, conflicting with the argument that eliminating the Cemetery Commission would be “cost-efficient”.
 - Church is a member of the Friends of Lakeview Cemetery and speaks for them in saying that they are opposed to the resolution to eliminate the Cemetery Commission as it now exists.
 - The resolution is not good publicity for anyone involved.
- ◆ Lea Terhune, member of the Appletree Point and Chittenden County Historical Societies, presented feedback from the two historical societies:
 - The cemeteries are consecrated ground, in the public trust, and their board should retain its independence.
 - The Cemetery Commission's charge is too different from that of Parks to merge the commissions. The Parks Commission would not have time to address Cemetery issues so they would be overlooked.
 - The Friends of Lakeview Cemetery are great, but not a replacement for the Cemetery Commission.
 - As a member of her Neighborhood Planning Association, she speaks with many people about issues: all feel Cemetery Commission is important & needs to be independent.
 - Public volunteer in City Government is very important. People who participate at this level often go on to hold public office.
 - She knows that City staff resources are stretched—the NPAs are addressing this by taking their own minutes instead of using staff. The Cemetery Commission could look at other ways to reduce load on Parks.
 - She noted that the 4:30 meeting time isn't convenient for people who work days.

V. Superintendent's Items

- A. Deryk Roach reported for Jesse Bridges about the process of handling work order requests in the Parks Department: To help make sure requests do not fall through the cracks, as can happen with emailed requests, Parks started using a networked system, “Facility Dude”, in August of 2014. Deryk is working with Martha Keenan to include Cemetery as a requestor.
 - ◆ Would be helpful to indicate where dogs ARE allowed, in the same message. Church suggested using 7 Days. Roach noted that the City Ordinance pertaining to dogs is changing.



- ◆ Trutor and Waldron thanked Roach for listening to the Commissioners' concerns and frustration with lack of resolution on maintenance issues.

VI. Commissioners' Items

- A. Jesse Bridges reported on the plan being developed by the City, Vermont Land Trust, Champlain Housing Trust and Eric Farrell to purchase some of the former orphanage property to add to the waterfront parks: 12 acres for \$2 million.
 - ◆ For the development proposed along the south side of Lakeview Cemetery, Eric has included 30' setback from the property line to the nearest road. This will be a tree buffer.

VII. Office Report – none.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:40 pm.