



## **Cemetery Commission Meeting Agenda**

APRIL 20, 2023, 4:30 PM

MEETING CONDUCTED VIA ZOOM AND  
IN PERSON AT THE SHARON BUSHOR CONFERENCE ROOM, CITY HALL, 149 CHURCH ST

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- I. Approval of Agenda
- II. Approval of Minutes from 1/19/2023 Meeting
- III. Public Forum
- IV. Presentation from City Dog Task Force – Maria Karunungan
- V. Staff/Director Items
  - Volunteer work day at Elmwood reminder – Holli Bushnell
  - Exterior construction update – Holli Bushnell
- VI. Commissioner Items
- VII. Adjournment



## Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes

**Meeting Date:** Thursday, April 20, 2023, 4:30 pm

**Commissioners Present:** Rita Church, Jennifer Diaz, Alexandra Millar, Nancy Kirby, Mary Wesley

**Staff Present:** Cindi Wight – BPRW Director, Holli Bushnell – Cemetery Staff, Steve Bachand – Cemetery and Grounds Manager

**Public Present:** Dave Cawley – Old East End Neighborhood Coalition, Maria Karunungan – Dog Task Force

Meeting was called to order at 4:32pm by Jennifer Diaz

### I. Approval of the Agenda

Diaz moved to adopt the agenda, Rita Church seconded, and all were in favor.

### II. Approval of Minutes from 1/19/2023

Diaz moved to approve the minutes, Alexandra Millar seconded, all were in favor.

### III. Public Forum

Dave Cawley resides on Nash place and works with Old East End Neighborhood Coalition. He and his group are looking into holding a celebration for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ethan Allen Monument dedication. The monument was originally dedicated in 1873, and the event was a massive celebration. Close to 2000 people attended, there was a parade from city hall up to Greenmount, many state and local dignitaries were present along with veterans from both the War of 1812 and the American Civil War. Jason Stuffle and Cawley want to put together a celebration for 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Cawley has been in touch with Preservation Burlington, the Ethan Allen Homestead, and VT State Historic Preservation Office representative Laura Trieschmann. The actual anniversary is on July 4, however the state has numerous other events taking place that day, so the intention would be to hold the event the weekend before the 4<sup>th</sup>. Cawley has been in touch with fife and drum corps and reenactor groups to perform and the Champlain College professor who published a biography of Ethan Allen in hopes that he will be willing to speak. The pieces coming together, and Cawley wanted to come to commission to see if there's any interest or advice on their part. Should the event outgrow the space available at Greenmount the Lake Monsters will be out of town on July 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, and activities could potentially be held at Centennial field. The original ceremony was held in Centennial Field before it was built.

Mary Wesley asked for confirmation of the proposed date of the celebration and Cawley confirmed it. Steve Bachand asked if the Lake Monsters would support allowing parking for the event in their lot, and Cawley confirmed that they were on board with allowing parking or even potentially allowing the event to take place in Centennial Field should the group in attendance grow larger than 30 to 40 people. Bachand mentioned the lack of power available at Greenmount and Cawley commented that was long as the group is 30 or smaller power will not necessarily be needed.



Cindi Wight stated that, as the Cemetery superintendent, she gives permission for food or drink to be present at the event.

Nancy Kirby asked if there was a possible head count for interested people or if the OEENC would be putting out an event invitation with an RSVP. Cawley responded that the kinds of offerings at the event will probably bring in a bigger crowd. He noted that a larger publicity effort would likely encourage reenactors, pipe and drum, and state officials to attend. Without publicity it's likely to be a smaller event contained to those with an interest in the history. At the moment there is no funding for this event and participants are not confirmed.

Public forum was closed at 4:44pm

#### **IV. Presentation from City Dog Task Force**

Maria Karunungan from the dog task force introduced herself and her group to the commission. She explained that the dog task force is working to address the growing number of dog incidents in Burlington. They have several sub-groups, one of which is looking at where dogs are currently using public spaces. As part of their discussion, dogs in cemeteries came up. Currently no dogs are allowed, even on leash, in city-owned cemeteries, however people are still walking their dogs in the cemeteries whether they're supposed to or not. The sub-group thought that perhaps there is an opportunity to resolve the issue of dogs in the cemeteries in a positive way. The city could start allowing dogs in cemeteries but control the usage by making it a pay-for-use program run by volunteers, the cemetery department, or other organizations.

At present Karunungan and her group are just brainstorming potential benefits. The city would have more control over access, the frequency of use, and be able to implement policies on how dogs are handled. Additionally, making the cemeteries a paid space for dogs could be a source of revenue. Karunungan also feels that opening up to dogs could help build a positive perception of cemetery as an accessible communal space.

Karunungan sites several other cities across the country, Washington, D.C., Brookline, MA, and Boulder, CO that have similar programs to what the dog task force is considering. These programs have rules and policies concerning use, the number of dogs allowed in the space, and cost/price of membership, and, were Burlington choose to follow their model, the commission would have oversight in regards to these policies. Karunungan asked if there might be someone on the commission who would be interested in working with the dog task force to flesh out ideas and work on logistics.

Kirby shared her surprise at the presentation. As a neighbor to Greenmount, she has neighbors who have been very polite about not using the cemetery for their dogs. She noted that an elderly woman was knocked over by a loose dog at Greenmount. In short, Kirby was not interested and feels that cemeteries are not a place for dogs. Kirby noted that Schmanska Park adjoins Greenmount and is a perfectly reasonable place to walk dogs. She feels that people know that cemeteries are off-limits for dogs. Kirby feels the commission has worked hard to keep the dogs out of the cemetery, and that this proposal would be stepping backwards. Kirby feels that the city has dog parks for dogs and is not interested in seeing any cemetery be used as a space for dogs.

Wesley stated that she would be interested to hear more about what the task force is learning. She was not aware of what spaces do and don't exist. She asked how opening cemeteries up for access in a



controlled way fits into larger scheme of task force. Karunungan explained that the leashed dog limitation in neighborhoods makes it hard for people who don't have yards or vehicles to drive to dog parks to have access. Off leash dog space makes up than 1% of city park space, which means there are very limited legal options for residents. This causes problems with dog behavior and violence to happen all over the city. The best way to improve dog and dog owner behavior is to give them legal places for dogs to let their energy out. People are breaking the rules everywhere because they don't have enough legal options. Elmwood Cemetery could be used as an off-leash space while Greenmount and Lakeview could be on-leash and on path only. If dogs need quieter place that's more controlled it could be a good opportunity for that. The thought was to try to have a structured program with education to improve things overall

Millar commented that her main concern would be enforcement of the rules and policies as the current situation is more of a free-for-all. She asked how enforcement would be structured to guide folks to the new program. Karunungan commented that there have been a lot of conversations around enforcement with BPRW. One idea is that first offenses result in required education and any offense following that would be a fine, but the plan has not been finalized.

Bachand stated that Lakeview could never be off-leash as it's an active cemetery and off-leash dogs would not be respectful to grieving families. He does, however, feel that Elmwood would be a great spot as it's almost already set up like a dog park. The problem is dog owners tend to not pick up their animals excrement. If this were to move forward dogs would have to be on leash because of lack of waste pick up and the program would have to be well regulated. Karunungan agreed and stated that the task force has run campaigns to encourage people to clean up after their animals.

Church stated that she does not support the concept in any way. She feels the cemetery is a place for people and grieving, not dogs. People pay a fee for the use of the property and they expect to be treated with respect, not to be frightened by a dog. She has been in cemetery with dogs loose and has been concerned for her own safety even though she's had dogs of her own. Church stated that she would never ever bring a dog to cemetery or school as she feels it's too dangerous. She does not see respect from dog owners and, consequently, doesn't want them in cemetery spaces. Karunungan commented that her presentation is just a proposal and asked the commission to please think about it.

Millar thanked Karunungan for the hard work she has been doing and stated that she is happy to be the point person if there's more movement on the subject in the future. Karunungan thanked the commission for their time.

#### **V. VOCA Work Day at Elmwood Reminder**

Holli Bushnell reminded the commission that Vermont Old Cemeteries Association will be holding a volunteer work day at Elmwood Cemetery on July 15<sup>th</sup> between 8am and noon and encouraged commissioners to attend if possible. Bachand and Paul Morris met with Tom Griffin earlier in the day to determine the exact scope of the work. Bachand added that volunteers should bring their own tools. There was some concern about the ability for volunteers to park on Elmwood Avenue. Cindi Wight noted that there is parking space nearby ONE community center and that Bushnell should contact Melissa Cate in regards to using the lot.

Bachand stated that the majority of the work will be done along the sidewalk areas on North St and Elmwood Ave. They plan to work on stones and monuments visible from road and sidewalk to improve



the curb appeal and then continue further into the cemetery once or twice a year working from front to back. He is not sure how long this will take, but once Elmwood is completed they hope to move to Greenmount and then Lakeview. If we get enough volunteers and do this twice a year, hopefully it won't take that long. Once we educate people and train them, we can hold workdays without VOCA and do on our own.

#### **VI. Exterior Construction Update**

Bushnell stated that Farrington Construction has been tentatively awarded the bid. Wight explained that they are the company currently working at Redstone cottage up the street. They are doing a great job and are able to provide historic work which is just what's needed for the Lakeview office. Work will be moving over to Lakeview as soon as Redstone is wrapped up.

Wight added that, although it wasn't added to the agenda, she would like to put forth the annual request for perpetual care fund interest. Bachand would like to maintain funding level from last year \$20,000 total, to use for seasonal employees this year. Kirby asked if it was the same group of workers returning this summer and Bachand confirmed that all of the workers from summer 2022 are returning. Diaz moved to have \$20,000 from perpetual care fund interest allocated towards summer staffing. Kirby seconded, and all in favor. Bachand shared his thanks for the support of the commission in the continued goal of keeping our cemeteries beautiful by keeping our team fully staffed.

#### **VII. Commissioner Items**

Kirby reports that the spruce and maple trees that fell over the winter have been cleaned up and she raked the front bank of the cemetery. She also reports that the Greenmount drive-in gate is now open for the season.

Bushnell reminded commissioners Church and Wesley that their terms expire in June. Wesley will be seeking reelection and Church has decided to retire. Diaz thanked Church for her long service on the commission and Millar suggested celebrating Church at the May meeting. Wight and Bachand also thanked Church for her continued leadership, depth of historical knowledge, great guidance and suggestions, and work as a conduit between the commission and the Friends of Lakeview.

Millar stated that if anyone wants to join gardening days, please let her know and she'll provide dates and times.

#### **VIII. Adjournment**

Diaz moved to adjourn the meeting, Kirby seconded, all were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 5:27pm. The next meeting will be held on 5/18 at 4:30pm in a location TBD.