



Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: Thursday, October 19, 2023, 4:30 pm

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

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

Meeting was called to order at 4:49pm by Jennifer Diaz

I. Approval of the Agenda

Diaz moved to adopt the agenda, Alexandra Millar seconded, and all were in favor.

II. Approval of Minutes from 4/20/2023

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

III. Public Forum

Public forum was opened at 4:50. As no members of the public were present or wished to speak it was also closed at 4:50pm

IV. Expanding Muslim Section Report

Steve Bachand explained that the Islamic Society of Vermont contacted our office with concerns about the remaining space in their section of the cemetery. Bachand and working foreman, Paul Morris, have been researching the area in the hopes of creating more lots and have found space for 21 additional lots for full burial at present. They are hopeful that there is likely room for approximately double that. Additionally, when section 8 is developed, the cemetery will allocate lots in that section for Muslim burial. Bachand will be meeting with the Islamic Society again on 11/15 to review the solutions they have been working on.

Cindi Wight asked Bachand to explain why the Muslims need to have their own section, and Bachand explained that Muslim burials are based on latitude and longitude. Their burial traditions are based off a compass and the section we set aside for them accommodates the directional needs. It makes finding burial space for them tricky, but we can accommodate them with some extra effort.

Wight explained that the city will be issuing an RFP for section 8 that will take the conceptual plans and turn them into actual designs for contractor. The Islamic Society would be involved in that stage of development because there may need to be some changes to the concept to accommodate Muslim burials in the final design. It's easier to make changes during the design portion of the process than to try to accommodate specific needs later. The first phase of section 8 development will feature cremations and full burial, and there is a possibility of looking at that space for green burials as well. Because Muslim practice is as close to green burial as is possible in Burlington due to the city ordinances, understanding Muslim burial needs allows us to use potentially calculate the needs for green burial (both pricing and space requirements).



Martha Dallas asked if she could be provided the existing information on Section 8 and Holli Bushnell confirmed that she would send it.

Millar wondered about potential high water or flooding issues in the Section 8 development and Wight reminded her that Section 8 is a blend of some clay but mostly loamy soil with good drainage. Millar recalled that Section 6 was the area that had issues with drainage, not Section 8. Bachand confirmed that he and cemetery staff did test digs in the area and the soil conditions for Section 8 are good.

Dallas commented that the existing burials in the Muslim section are in rows like the other areas of the cemetery. She asked for further explanation of the specific requirements for Muslim burial.

Bachand explained that bodies are placed in the vaults on an angle so that they will face Mecca. Muslim burial wants the person laying on their side with their head looking west which is, of course, very different from traditional burial.

VI. Staff/Director items

Holli Bushnell reported that, since the last commission meeting, cemetery staff has successfully dealt with unhoused individuals camping in both Elmwood and Lakeview Cemeteries with the assistance of Neil Preston, the city's lead Urban Park Ranger. Our neighbors at Elmwood have been particularly diligent in informing the office when there is a new tent in the cemetery grounds, for which we are quite grateful. The office also just received a new printer which will allow Bushnell to begin printing burial cards, a task she has been unable to completely for around 3 years due to a change of printer. Finally, Bushnell has also been working to enter existing burial cards into the Pontem database and is optimistic she will be able to complete the project before the end of the year. Following the completion of the burial card entry, Bushnell will begin entering lot cards to cross check existing information.

Bachand wanted to give a shout out to the three cemetery staffers, Bushnell, Morris, and Maintenance Manager Sherman Wood. This was the first summer for Paul and Sherman and Bachand feels they did a great job. Bachand visits Lakeview multiple times a week, and the place looks great! Kudos to the crew. Wight shared her agreement and Nancy Kirby shared that her neighbors have great things to say about Greenmount. Bushnell shared that Bachand has been an excellent supervisor Bachand has been as well.

VII. Commissioner Items

Kirby shared her frustration regarding a specific couple who repeatedly misuses Greenmount as an open run space for their dog. The dog has little to no training, is understandably aggressive to and excited by wild animals, and is allowed to defecate wherever it would like without any clean up. Kirby has asked the couple to stop, reminded them of ordinance, and reminded them that the space they are using as a dog run is a cemetery, but they don't care. Kirby asked if there's anything we can do.

Wight asked if Kirby knew the dog owner's address and when Kirby confirmed that she did Wight suggested sending a letter to the couple. Dallas agreed that sending a letter that reminds them of the rules is a practical solution that would provide a paper trail.

Dallas asked if she could be provided minutes from previous meetings as the city has reorganized website and she has had difficulty finding them. Bushnell will send her past minutes if she continues to struggle.



Dallas also shared that, in her new role as a commissioner, she would love to keep working on green burials as she was previously part of the subcommittee. Wesley shared that work on the project paused as the sub-committee came up against larger procedural problems. She would also like to revisit green burials in the future. Wight shared that Morris has looked at pilot section for green burials in Lakeview, but procedures need to be developed before we can bring it into action. Bachand added that he also looked into the area Morris believes might work to explore green burials but agrees that policies and procedures (monument restrictions, space requirements, employee comfort, what people can do/not do, family involvement, etc...) need to be in place before we can take another step forward. Wight asked if this a good winter project and Bachand confirmed that it was one of the items on the agenda for the winter.

Dallas added that she would love to assist in gathering information and helping to figure out policies and procedures and Bachand was grateful for her offer of assistance. Bachand cautioned that he feels we need to take our time, do our due diligence, and make sure we do everything right. Bachand briefly mentioned the example of pre-selling green burial lots versus reserving them for at-will burials and the equity issues that come with sales. He noted that the Islamic Society would likely want to pre-purchase the green burial area as they have been working towards green practices since we designate the Muslim section for them. Diaz suggested tabling the issue until the next meeting and all were in agreement.

VIII. Adjournment

Diaz moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:37pm, Kirby seconded, all were in favor. The next meeting will be held November 16, 2023 at 4:30pm at the Lakeview Cemetery office and via zoom.