

Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: January 18, 2024

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

Staff Present: Cindi Wight, Steve Bachand, Holli Bushnell

Meeting was called to order 4:44pm at by Chair Jennifer Diaz

I. Approval of Agenda

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

II. Approval of minutes from 10/19/2023

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

III. Public Forum

Public forum was opened at 4:46pm. As no members of the public were present or wished to speak public forum was also closed at 4:46pm.

IV. GIS Section Mapping

Holli Bushnell shared updated maps of several sections at Lakeview cemetery. She explained that working foreman Paul Morris has dedicated a large amount of his time to improving cemetery maps using GIS. He has worked on the Muslim section, areas of section 3 and single section 1, and he recently completed mapping section 5. Bushnell shared that these maps don't only accurately the location of all the graves in the section, it's able to show different layers, including occupied/unoccupied, lot ownership, and the kinds of monuments allowed in the lots. This will be tremendously helpful for Bushnell in terms of future lot sales and grounds staff in terms of locating existing lots for burials. Diaz lauded the progress that Morris had made in mapping sections, stating that it was very exciting to see the capabilities of GIS in the context of the cemetery. Millar thanked Bushnell for the presentation and extended her thanks to Morris for his hard work!

V. Lakeview Signage

Cindi Wight shared the final image of the new sign for the entrance of Lakeview cemetery. The new sign will match other BPRW signage, indicating that Lakeview is part of the parks system. Mary Wesley asked if Greenmount and/or Elmwood will also be getting new signs, and Wight



confirmed that Elmwood is also scheduled to get new signs. Greenmount has an historic sign which is in good condition and does not need a replacement. Elmwood will receive new signs on both the Elmwood Ave and North Street entrances. While it is unclear when the new signage will arrive, Steve Bachand shared that he would check in following the meeting to get a better idea of the arrival time. The status of the section specific signage is unclear at this time. Millar shared that she appreciated the new branding, making it clear that the cemeteries are part of BPRW and adding layers to the concept of cemetery usage. She feels that the change in branding may encourage cemeteries to be used differently by the community and feels that is a positive shift. Diaz added that the BPRW branding may help eliminate preconceived misgivings people have about cemeteries. She was appreciative of the shift.

VI. Brainstorm – items for future meetings

Wesley recalled that when she started with the Cemetery Commission the group held a retreat. She felt it might be a good idea to hold another retreat, using a facilitator to discuss roles and hold space for ideas. Wight felt that it would be a good idea to do again if there was interest from the full commission. That said, previous facilitator, Emma Mulvaney-Stanak is running for mayor, so she would likely be unavailable until after the election (or much longer). Mulvaney-Stanak did provide Wight with the names of other facilitators, however.

Dallas liked the idea of a retreat and asked how long it would last. She added that, if staff were involved, she would like to learn what their day-to-day work is like.

Diaz moved to hold another retreat.

Wight asked if commissioners would prefer to hold the retreat in the evening or during the day, and Diaz shared that she would be unable to attend if the retreat was held during the workday. Bachand added that he would check in with staff to see if they would be interested in participating (or joining for part of the retreat)

Millar shared that she would like to clarify the commissions goals ahead of the retreat including what they intended to get out of it. Her hope is to get more clarity as well as explore their hopes and dreams.

Wight suggested discussing goals for the retreat at the Cemetery Commission's February meeting as Mulvaney-Stanak's availability will be clearer after the March election. Dallas asked about the objectives of the last retreat suggesting that the commission may want to do something similar. Diaz forwarded the retreat agenda to Bushnell and she will send it to the rest of the commission ahead of the February meeting.

Dallas continued by sharing her sense that a retreat should be broader than just generating future meeting topics. She would like to review roles, responsibilities, the authority of staff and the authority of commissioners.

Dallas continued by sharing that she would like to discuss green burial – specifically the intersection between green burial and section 8 development. She would also like to know the



big items on the staff's plates – to know what the staff is doing so she can see further down the road. She wants updates on future projects instead of updates on what has been completed. Wesley would like to check in on volunteer opportunities. She shared that VOCA was somewhat disappointed in the volunteer turn out at their Elmwood work day.

Wight added that the commission always needs to approve the use of funds from the Perpetual Care Fund in April.

Millar asked about the different groups who overlap with the Cemeteries such as the Friends of Lakeview, Grow Wild, and the Old East Enders. She would like to figure out how the commission can better support them. She also asked about holding elections for chair and vice chair, put on next meeting to elect new vice chair. Wight shared that elections are generally held when new commissioners join. Diaz suggested switching the election from alignment with the fiscal year to aligning with the calendar year, allowing new commissioners to get to know the rest of the commission before electing leadership.

Wight suggested providing commissioners with a calendar of events/activities taking place at the cemeteries. Dallas added that she would like a new commissioner resource packet.

Martha – New commissioner packet/folder of resources would be really helpful.

VII. Staff/Director items

Wight shared that Sophie Sauve is ready to send out the RFP for Section 8 development design. This will be the part of the process when what's been conceptual on paper will meet reality on ground. The RFP will be to develop construction drawings, then there will be an additional RFP to bid out for the physical work. Wight confirmed that the Muslim community will be involved in this phase of the process to insure lots for full burial are correctly aligned for their burial needs.

Next Wight shared that the Lakeview office is finally under construction! The current work is all on the exterior as there are not funds for the interior work at present. What's important is that the exterior will both look great and be returned to safe, perfect condition.

Kathy Davis of the Friends of Lakeview has reached out to Wight with the final designs for new lighting in the chapel. The Friends have completed fundraising and are ready to actually do the work. That said, the contract will not be put out until final drawings are approved. It will be a city contract if approved. Diaz was particularly excited to hear the work is getting started.

Wight added that the city is continuing to discuss water storage tanks with Cambrian Rise, reminding the commission that they approved the tanks several years previous. Negotiations are ongoing and DPW will bring the plans to the Cemetery Commission for their approval before work begins. Wight confirmed that the MOU for with Cambrian Rise will require them to do any repair work should the tanks leak or any issue with them arise.

Bachand shared that grounds staff has done a great job cutting back hedgerow by bike path. The area is now split into South and North sections, with the South section cut down to the ground



for the winter and the North Section removed completely. This area has been a longtime eyesore with excessive overgrowth and it looks much better now. Staff will now be able to maintain the South section every five years with greater ease. Millar asked if the removal in the North area was causing slumping or soil erosion. Bachand confirmed that staff brought in a large amount of soil to fill in what was lost in the plant removal. The grade of the area is quite steep, and the new material will flatten out overtime. What's currently happening is the usual – storm water erosion.

Bachand shared that Morris has created a new general email for cemetery, cemeteries@burlingtonvt.gov, with the intention of making sure all communication is shared with all cemetery staffers. He continued his update by sharing that BPRW grounds crew joined up with cemetery staff to remove the remaining tents at Elmwood earlier that day and all tents are gone (for now). Finally, work will be done behind the chapel in the spring and fall, creating a large no-mow zone with lots of plantings on whole embankment leading up to chapel. This will now be a conservation garden. Bachand hopes that other low-mow/conservation areas can be developed around the mature trees contained within the Lakeview grounds as those spaces are very challenging to maintain.

VIII. Commissioner items

Dallas asked for time at future meetings to be dedicated to green burial.

Bachand asked her to clarify what she's looking for and she explained that she would like to know what would be most helpful for the commission to do to keep the green burial train moving forward.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:58pm. The next meeting will be held February 15, 2024 at 4:30pm, likely at the Lakeview office.