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**TOWN OF  
BROOKLINE, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
Cemetery Trustees**

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<http://www.brooklinenh.us>

***Brookline Cemetery Trustees  
Minutes  
October 8, 2020***

Present:

Brian Rater, chair  
Ann Somers, secretary  
Ann Webb, member

Also present:

Judy Cook

The meeting began in the Town Hall meeting room at 6:34 pm.

A number of items were added to the agenda to address issues arising since the meeting was posted.

The minutes from September 23<sup>rd</sup> were unanimously approved as written.

**North Cemetery update**

**Greg d'Arbonne / North Cemetery missing marker**

Deacon Thomas Bennett, recorded as buried behind the missing vault marker, was apparently not a veteran. **Ann Webb** reported conversation with Gregg d'Arbonne and others about the possibility and a potential process for offering to the relatives of veterans the option to purchase flag holders at the time of burial. **Ann Webb will follow up on this.**

**Lakeside Cemetery update**

**Brian** reported an accident with a marker being cleaned by a volunteer, in which the marker broke. The volunteer, of course, was dismayed and apologetic.

**Meanwhile, a sculptor associated with Andres Institute**, who is staying with Judy and Peter Cook and who is experienced in repairing gravestones, **has volunteered to do various repair work for Brookline at no charge**, as weather permits, most likely starting in the spring. **All gratefully agreed to accept this generous offer.**

## Pine Grove Cemetery

**Ann Webb agreed to follow up with Tad Putney regarding inventory and bidding for completion of the fence.** As Tad was leaving the building **Brian caught his attention and made the request, which Tad accepted.**

**Ann Somers** reported that resident Bob Eaton was kind enough to provide an arborist's guidance for the three small donated maples trees that have been suffering this year. His comments: the northernmost tree is doing fine, a little useful pruning was suggested; the middle tree will not survive, should be removed; the southernmost is planted too deep and will suffer from it, but nothing can be done aside from monitoring. They don't need further pruning at present.

## Rules and Procedures updates

**All voted in favor of the following updated text:**

### *IV. Interments*

*B. Cost: A fee shall be paid to the Town of Brookline for opening a grave. The fee is \$700 for a full grave and \$200 for a cremation. Fees are subject to adjustment by the Sexton in the case of seasonal or other special needs.*

**Ann Somers will make this update, review other recent updates to the Rules & Procedures, and forward the document to Tad for processing.**

## Minimum salable lot sizes

We had added this discussion to the agenda at Mike's request, but in his absence it was postponed.

## Update status of cemetery records

Since the last meeting, efforts have been made by **Brian** and **Judy Cook** to collect all the available records regarding Brookline's cemeteries. **Brian and Ann Webb will make further contacts with Jerry Farwell and Keith Thompson in this effort.** **Judy Cook** has voluntarily consolidated records from multiple sources into one cohesive electronic file which ultimately will be available and searchable online, reconciling errors to the degree possible. The records include the Word file from the Farwells, the Historical Society's typewritten grave inscriptions compilation, the Pine Grove master plot book, spiral notebooks with sequential entries of burials from the 1990s, maps (some originals are framed and reside at Town Hall), and four boxes of assorted papers currently held in storage by Town Clerk Patti Howard-Barnett. **Judy will forward the completed file to the Trustees.**

## Mapping of cemeteries

A number of graves noted on the **Palance-Farwell-Quimby North Cemetery** map (2006 CAD, upper Town Hall hallway) do not have visible markers. **Ann Somers will forward to Ann Webb electronic copies of the maps.**

The so-far unused (southwest) corner of **Pine Grove** needs to be surveyed and mapped professionally, and the whole map created electronically. **Judy** and **Mike** would like to address the vacant gravesites that might be made available. **Judy** noted that there are many empty lots at Pine Grove, including old 10-gravesite family plots with only one or two burials. The historical southeast section has not been mapped; some ideas are in process. **Judy Cook** suggested we employ GPS coordinates to help people locate graves. The numbering systems in both Pine Grove and Lakeside present significant challenges. We are grateful to Judy for addressing them!

### **Cemetery and grave site maintenance policies**

We have discovered that there is an RSA governing volunteer maintenance of grave sites (XXVI 289-14), which requires that anyone volunteering to do maintenance on other than family plots must receive official permission to do so and must provide public notice. There are currently “best practices” in place for cleaning gravestones. Recently a volunteer has been doing some gravestone cleaning, following best practices but not aware that permission or notice was required. Most who viewed the cleaned marble stones earlier this year were very pleased with the results. Ann Somers reported that she has examined cleaned marble markers elsewhere and at Lakeside, and found that recently cleaned marble appears to have a rougher surface than the naturally weathered stones. She expressed concern about the possibility of long-term unintended consequences due to increased vulnerability, and the frequent evolution/re-evaluation of “best practices” in general. Ann Webb suggested, and we all agreed, that there will be no further cleaning done at this time, and that more research would be useful.

### **Gravestone rubbing**

Some towns have policies regarding gravestone rubbing. RSA 289:22 states gravestone rubbing is prohibited without written permission from town selectmen or a city mayor, and thus by statute does not apply to the Trustees.

### **Expanding the Trustees**

Ann Somers noted that there are benefits to two trustees sharing tasks during this transition, but with only three trustees, any subgroup of two constitutes a quorum and thus requires a formal, posted meeting. Following discussion of possibly expanding to five, we all agreed that the situation is temporary, three members are sufficient for general purposes, and we will simply post public meetings as work needs suggest.

### **Records process and roles**

When we are able to meet with both Mike and Patti, we will discuss and determine who is responsible for which parts of the paperwork for plot sales and burials. We agreed that **putting together a packet of information for purchasers is a goal. Ann Somers will provide materials used by some other towns for packet ideas.** We agreed that we want the process to be simple and comfortable for the sexton to use, and that our primary working materials, including the maps for Pine Grove and Lakeside, will be electronic once all is consolidated. We plan to identify which records are “official” and in active use (and by whom), and which are designated as “archival” and simply stored by the Town Clerk.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 p.m. in the Town Hall meeting room.

Minutes submitted by Ann C. Somers