

# Town of Sunapee Cemetery Commission

Meeting Notes - November 29, 2022

Present: Jeff Trow and Barbara Chalmers

Those noted above met at Town Hall with call to order at 5 PM.

The following was discussed.

1. **Motion** by Barbara to elect Jeff as chairman and Barbara as secretary. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jeff. Vote unanimous in favor.
2. Discussion of proposed 2022 Cemetery Commission budget of \$15,876. Jeff noted that we will work within whatever funds the town provides. Barbara reported that the budget breaks down as follows:

Labor Costs: \$11,085; Equipment Repair: \$750; Insurance \$557, Supplies \$2,336.

Barbara asked if the budget includes funds for fill needed at New Eastman Cemetery. Jeff responded no, costs for fill would come from the Cemetery Expendable Trust Fund. He hopes that useable town fill that is stockpiled at the recycling center can be brought to the cemetery for use to expand available burial plots.

3. The effort to digitize, research, and compile cemetery records from 1801 to present for the seven town cemeteries begun last April is now completed. New cemetery burial maps, burial lists, and plot ownership tables for each cemetery have been prepared and are assembled in notebooks with Jeff and the Town Manager. Barbara will update these records at least once a year.
4. During this research four deed issues were found:
  - South Sunapee Cemetery: Town tax records shown this town cemetery as owned by Harding Hill Farm LLC. This error is attributed to an inadvertent omission in a 1989 deed.
  - Cooper Cemetery: Right of way was deeded in 1839 and appears in 1848 and 1857 deeds, but then was omitted in later deeds.
  - Lower Village Cemetery: Its 1931 deeded right of way is shown incorrectly on town tax map.
  - Old Eastman Cemetery Perkins Section: Deeds transferring unsold lot ownership from John W Rowell to Edward Perkins in 1933 and then From Rowell to Edward's widow, Pearl Perkins in 1942 were found, but no deed transferring ownership from Perkins to the town was found.

The town manager has recommended that the commission authorize expending funds from the Cemetery Expendable Trust for attorney's fees to resolve these deed issues.

**Motion** by Jeff to use Cemetery Expendable Trust funds for attorney's fees to look into and clear up cemetery deed and right-of-way issues. Second by Barbara, Vote unanimous in favor.

5. Name signs for each cemetery will be installed in 2023. Barbara contacted town planner Michael Marquis and requested that street numbers be assigned to cemeteries, which can then be included on the new signs. For cemeteries not fronting on a road, the road accessing the cemetery right-of-way will be used ( Lower Main Street for the village cemetery and Stagecoach Road for Cooper and Colby Cemeteries.)
6. Bylaws and Regulations of the Sunapee Cemetery Commission were adopted in 2006. Barbara proposed some updates for consideration:
  - In the listing of Sunapee Cemeteries, add whether plots are available for embalmed remains, green burials and/or cremains. At the historic cemeteries markers to be limited to

flush mount type to preserve the historic character. Jeff noted that the Old Eastman Extension is sold out.

- Adding a section titled Conduct Within the Cemetery to include prohibition of littering, grave rubbing, signs, unleashed dogs, vehicles driven or parked on plots, and disturbing markers or plantings.

- Cemetery Burial Requirements: Add notifying the Chairman in advance of a burial, plot corner pins provided by the commission, graves dug only by the commission, and embalmed remains require a concrete vault with full piece cover. A burial permit for embalmed remains is provided by the funeral home and travels with the remains. Cremains do not require a burial permit.

- A new section for Cremation burials is proposed that pulls together related existing regulations into a dedicated section. Cremains burials to change from a maximum of 6 to 4 per 4-foot by 10-foot plot.

- A new section for Green burials is proposed that defines requirements for Green burials. Barbara noted that Green burials are allowed at cemeteries in Acworth, Charlestown, Plainfield and Springfield. Green burials save energy and do not put embalming chemicals into the ground. Remains are allowed to decay naturally – “ashes to ashes, dust to dust”. Discussion included allowing Green burials in Sunapee in a new section of New Eastman Cemetery to be created in the near future. Graves for Green burials to be opened and closed by the commission.

- Cemetery Lot Purchases: Add that deeds may be sold back to the town or sold to third parties, but if the latter, then the deed must be presented to the Cemetery Commission and a new deed in the new owner's name will be issued. Add allowing a maximum of 8 graves to be purchased by any individual.

- Cemetery Lot Appearance: Add a prohibition of new curbing, fencing and the like at burial plots due to interference with lawn maintenance. Add that the town of Sunapee will provide flags at the graves of U.S. military veterans. Add guidelines for maximum monument size related to plot size.

- Existing regulations regarding Plot Forfeiture Procedures to be moved to their own section. Barbara will prepare a final draft for review and acceptance by the commission. Upon acceptance, the accepted regulations go to the Selectmen for adoption.

7. Barbara will follow-up with updates to the Cemetery Commission webpage at the town's website.
8. Establishing burial costs: Jeff noted that the cost to open and close a grave with a coffin is presently \$400 and for cremains \$100. In 2023 to help cover costs, those prices will increase to \$450 and \$150. In 2022 the cost of a 4-ft by 10-ft grave plot is \$300 and that will increase, price yet to be determined. Funds from plot sales and burials go into the Cemetery Expendable Trust Fund for cemetery maintenance and expansion use. Jeff noted that burial pricing has not differentiated between weekday and weekend burials despite differences in labor costs, but Sunday burials are not encouraged.
9. The public has been noticed that grave decorations are to be removed by now.
10. Barbara reported that the history of Sunapee's cemeteries and Cemetery Commission is being researched. An synopsis of information for each year from 1801 to present is being compiled. Barbara noted that Jeff began serving on the Cemetery Commission in 1983 and thanked him for his many years of service to the town.

Meeting adjourned at 6:15 PM

Barbara B. Chalmers, secretary