

CEMETERY COMMISSION MINUTES

October 25, 2023

Meeting opened at 3:08pm by Chair Flaherty

Present: Bob Flaherty, Jonathan Bardwell, Lucinda Williams. Also attending: Joe Lavallee, Cemetery Caretaker, Phil Genovese, DPW Director

1. Hill Cemetery- Concern: Two townspeople came before the commission with a concern about the property at 3 Prospect Street, the land abutting the Hill Cemetery. The town does not plant hedgerows around our cemeteries (a maintenance issue), so we are confident the overgrown trees on the town property border were not planted by the town and are not the responsibility of the town. Our DPW has trimmed the bushes on the town side of the line. We do not remove any trees or limbs that are on town property and are healthy. Capacity: Hill Cemetery is full. Canada Waite grave- Stone is disintegrating. There is currently a lead plate that has been placed over the stone to protect it. Perhaps a CPA grant or the Hatfield Historical Society would be interested in taking on this project. It will probably cost \$6-7000 to repair.
2. Main Street Cemetery- Usage: There has been some talk of using the back parcel of the Main Street Cemetery for a pickleball court. History: Curly Carl sold that land to the town for the express use as a cemetery. Joe Lavallee was instrumental in arranging for that purchase. We have long stated that nothing with a permanent structure is to be put on that site. We have allowed the Community Garden in that space with a garden shed that can be easily moved. The schools have inquired about using that land for playing fields over the years but it was decided that a dugout would be too permanent. The land is currently leased to a local farmer. Phil G will have the DPW put cemetery markers around the town cemetery land after a survey is complete. There must also be a plan in place for land maintenance. Motion made by Lucinda to disallow a pickleball court to be put on that land, citing (a) the land is currently leased, (b) no permanent structures are allowed on the land, (c) the community garden as first dibs on using the land. Second by Bob Flaherty. Jonathon Bardwell recused himself. Motion passed. Repair: a pillar on the Main Street Cemetery will need repair. Capacity: Currently 90% full. The back part of the old section of Main Street Cemetery has a burial area for paupers and slaves. This area is not available for purchase of plots. We will next need to open space in the back. Sophia Smith grave- Smith College is responsible for the maintenance and repair of the Smith family plot. Current contacts at Smith College are Nanci Young- College Archivist and Sam Massinter- . Smith College currently has the finial that has broken from the top of the headstone and should be repaired.
3. Bradstreet Cemetery has some open space (66% full), but many of the plots have been purchased and are without headstones, so it may appear more available.
4. North Hatfield Cemetery on West Street is almost full.
5. West Street Cemetery in West Hatfield has some available room.
6. Green Burials- For non-cremated burials, the remains must be placed at least six feet underground. With cremains, they may be placed anywhere in the 4x10 plot, with any number of cremains in one plot, as long as the mower can get around the site easily.
7. Unused Plots- The Town of Hatfield will purchase unused plots back. We can only buy back a plot for the purchase price, not the current price of a plot. If the seller does not have proof of purchase price, the Town Clerk can determine the price with a multiplier in the Perpetual Care book at the Town Hall.

8. Headstone Repair- Each family is responsible for the care and maintenance of their tombstones. The town doesn't own the land or headstone. The town will fix a headstone that is historical and with no known family. Board of Selectmen will be asked to have someone on call who can do headstone repairs. We do have some epoxy that can be used for small repairs. Town is currently taking care of weeds in the cemeteries.
9. Maintenance- The town does not plant hedgerows around our cemeteries (a maintenance issue), so we are confident the overgrown trees on the town property border were not planted by the town and are not the responsibility of the town. Our DPW has trimmed the bushes on the town side of the line. We do not remove any trees or limbs that are on town property and are healthy.
10. Maps- Purchased plots are logged on the computer along with a hard paper copy.
11. Pets- Hatfield does not have a pet cemetery and we do not want to become one. When pets are cremated, we do not ask where they are placed.
12. Many funeral homes want to purchase plots in town and Joe fields several calls per year. In order to purchase a plot in Hatfield, people must have a connection to Hatfield; ie. must have been born here, lived here, voted here, etc.
13. Membership- Chair, Bob Flaherty; Secretary- Lucinda Williams; Member- Jonathan Bardwell; Caretaker- Joe Lavallee. We will need a cemetery point person once Joe Lavallee is no longer our Cemetery Caretaker.
14. Monument Companies currently recommended- Negus and Taylor (Greenfield), Scott Monuments (South Hadley) who also do sandblasting.