

**Town of Charleston
Cemetery Commission Meeting 11/09/23**

MINUTES

A meeting of the town Cemetery Commission was held November 9, 2023. Attending were Commission Members Sherman Allen Jr., Janice Bowen, Grace Frizzell, and Martin Davis; Sexton/Laborer Brad Peters; Town Clerk & Treasurer Teri Gray; and Asst. Clerk Colleen Kellogg.

THESE MINUTES ARE UNOFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVED AT THE NEXT MEETING

Chairperson Sherman Allen called the meeting to order at 4:59 pm and welcomed all attendees. He asked members to allow Brad Peters to speak on all matters, and all members agreed.

Janice Bowen moved to approve the minutes of the May 11, 2023 meeting as written, with a second by Grace Frizzell, and the minutes were approved. There were no changes to the agenda.

Under Public Comment, Grace Frizzell said the grounds at Hillside look much better and thanked Brad Peters for doing a great job repairing the area.

Sherm Allen shared a new Lot Sale Form he has used when meeting with buyers to record needed information, including the letter for corner posts and name(s) on the deed. Buyers/families with two last names can order two posts of each letter or four posts that show both letters separated by a slash. Teri Gray said the form helps her by providing the information to write and mail the deed. All members approved the use of the form going forward.

There is an area of Hillside near lots owned by Arvin Anderson and Martin Davis that are too steep to even mow let alone perform a burial. Sherm suggested members could look at the maps later and mark out any that should not be sold. Brad Peters suggested the lots might still be used for cremation only. The type of marker might also need to be limited to a cross or footstone.

Regarding lot sales, Cassy Moulton is interested in purchasing an irregular, pie-shaped lot next to her lot with her father. There could be room for a foot stone. It is comparable to a cremation lot, so members agreed the cremation lot price would be appropriate. Brad Peters said there is room to install four corner posts.

Regarding stone cleaning and cemetery Perpetual Care Funds, Grace Frizzell said there are stones in urgent need of cleaning and asked if the Fund interest provides for the care of the cemeteries. Teri Gray replied that it did not cover costs, and taxes are raised to fill the gap. Ms. Gray confirmed that only interest can be spent, so the options to raise cleaning funds include increasing interest by investing differently or keeping funds liquid by allocating less of each lot sale to the Fund. To clean stones, funds would have to be spent that year or they would go into the General Fund. Alternatively, the commission could ask voters to create a reserve fund for the

purpose of cleaning and repairing stones. Currently, the town directs more of each sale price to Perpetual Care than the minimum 20%. Janice Bowen suggested the board reduce the amount into perpetual care to free up income for stone cleaning. Brad Peters said some vendors charge up to \$100 per stone. Instead, he suggests hiring someone for the day to clean as many as possible. The Chair said the Commission will have to decide where to begin cleaning efforts. Teri Gray suggested this question could be discussed when the matter is brought before voters. Grace Frizzell mentioned volunteer efforts in other towns and wondered if someone knowledgeable could lead volunteers to clean a larger number of stones.

Janice Bowen made a motion to reduce the perpetual care contribution to 20% of each sale price. The motion was seconded by Martin Davis, and the motion was approved by voice vote. Cemetery Commissioners favor creation of a town meeting article to create a reserve fund and will work with the Town Clerk to advance this.

Under Items Needed for Cemeteries, Brad Peters said fence posts are needed as follows: 30 for Bly, 15 for Buck, and 6 for Crawford Hill. Steel t-posts are 5.99, and cedar posts are \$3-4 for 6-8ft. Brad said steel posts work okay to reinforce wood posts but don't look great on their own. He also raised the possibility of removing fencing, but there were concerns about animals/wildlife.

Teri Gray shared a 2023 cemetery budget update, showing there is \$5,000 remaining for 2023 expenses, including budgeted mower replacement. Commission members agreed to purchase fence posts as well as a new mower. Brad recommends a 42" for maneuverability around stones, and he and Martin will look at prices. The Hillside shed should be stained next year; a gallon of stain can be purchased now and stored at the office.

Flags are needed for veterans' graves next year. There are very few left, and additional veterans are now on the list. Sherm Allen will give his contact at the Legion a heads-up.

All members agreed that the labor rate should be kept at \$16/hr for 2024. A proposed cemetery budget for 2024 was discussed, including level funding in wages and flags and an increase for gasoline. The equipment line item will depend on whether a mower can be purchased this year.

Seeing no other business, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 5:58 pm. The next meeting will be held in May 9, 2024 at 5:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sherman Allen, Jr. Chairperson

Approved this 9th day of May, 2024

Cemetery Commissioners, Town of Charleston