

PEMBROKE CEMETERY COMMISSION MEETING

April 11, 2024

Minutes

Present: James Garvin, Adam Mendoza, Ellen Paulsen (chair), Zachary Sawyer, Fleda Young.

1. Chair Ellen Paulsen called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
2. On a motion by Fleda Young, seconded by Zachary Sawyer, the minutes of the meeting of October 12, 2023, were approved unanimously.

New Business:

3. Chair Ellen Paulsen reminded the Commission that flags are to be placed at veterans' graves before Memorial Day, May 31, 2024 (see Item 6, below, for further discussion).
4. Chair Paulsen reported that in January she received an email from Ayn Whytemare of the Pembroke Historical Society seeking permission for the society to host a gravestone cleaning workshop in the spring of 2024. The workshop would be conducted by Amelia Aznive of Concord, who has led similar events in various communities. The proposed workshop would clean the monuments with an organic solvent labeled D2, which has been formulated for cleaning surfaces with lichens, moss, and algae, and is especially marketed as a gravestone cleaner.

Commission members had several questions about the proposal, including:

- a. Would the work be limited to one cemetery, such as Pembroke Street Cemetery?
- b. Would the work be limited to monuments of the workers' own families, where permission could be asked and obtained? Some families may prefer the unaltered aged appearance of ancestral monuments.
- c. Would the workshop be simply a demonstration of cleaning and a training opportunity for participants to work on their own family monuments later?
- d. Could the demonstration be limited to one smaller stone first in order to be sure of the results before treatment of a large, complex, or more monumental stone?
- e. Could the work be limited to monuments of harder stone such as granite and slate? Many white marble stones, which tend to show staining the worst, have proven to have soft and granular surfaces due to acid rain. The recommended use of soft bristle brushes with D2 could act as an abrasive treatment on a granular surface and increase the erosion of the stone.

Following these comments, the Commission agreed that we should discuss questions and details with Ayn Whytemare before agreeing to the workshop. Secretary Garvin will convey the Commission's interest in having a further discussion to Ayn.

5. On February 22, Public Works secretary Christine Addington received a call from Bob Littlefield. Mr. Littlefield asked whether the town could display American and MIA (Missing in Action) flags in the Pembroke Hill Cemetery, which presently does not have a flagpole. At present, an MIA flag is displayed on the flagpole at Pembroke Street Cemetery. Adam Mendoza will try to learn why that flagpole was selected for display of an MIA flag and whether Mr. Littlefield possibly donated that flag.

The Commission believed that Mr. Littlefield's question was simply an inquiry about the possibility of displaying flags, not an offer to donate a flagpole. Both V. J. Ranfos and Ellen Paulsen have looked at the cemetery and question whether there is room for a new flagpole behind the front retaining wall. Ellen has talked with Mr. Littlefield and told him that there is doubt about the possibility of placing a flagpole at the cemetery.

6. On April 8, the Commission received an email from Catrina Rantala, who supervises local Cub Scout dens. Ms. Rantala stated that her scouts would like to place flags before Memorial Day at four of the largest Pembroke cemeteries:
 - a. Evergreen Cemetery—78 flags—Wolf Den.
 - b. Pembroke Street Cemetery—70 flags—Tiger Den.
 - c. Buck Street Cemetery—64 flags—Webelos Den.
 - d. Pembroke Hill Cemetery—32 flags—Bear and Lion Dens.

Because these cemeteries are under the charge of different Commission members, Secretary Garvin will write to Ms. Rantala and provide her with contact information for each responsible Commission member. He will also reiterate the need for good adult supervision, especially for dens that include younger scouts and their siblings.

It will also be necessary for Commission members to check flag holders in each cemetery and remove any stubs of flag sticks that may be lodged in the holders from last year.

7. A proposed cemetery capital reserve fund appropriation of \$10,000 was not approved at the 2024 Town Meeting. There remains a capital reserve balance that may be available for selected projects in 2024. V. J. Ranfos will inquire about that balance to learn whether we can proceed with the widening of one or more of the driveway entrances at Evergreen Cemetery.
8. On March 1, Dignified Cemetery Services again raised its rates for burials. Secretary Garvin will draft and send a proposal to the Board of Selectmen recommending that the Town raise its rates a commensurate amount in order to avoid a deficit in the town's burial charges, which are used to reimburse Dignified Cemetery Services for each burial.

Old business:

9. All three registered letters sent by the Commission to the father of Ryan Mihill requesting removal of the excessive ornaments at the Mihill grave in Evergreen Cemetery were returned to the Town as undeliverable. At present, no new ornaments have been placed

at the Mihill grave following the town's removal of ornaments in November 2023. The masonry Mihill bench is still in an area that is reserved as a pathway.

10. The Commission briefly reviewed any known damaged headstones that were not repaired in 2023. Ellen Paulsen noted one leaning stone in Old North Pembroke Cemetery and one cracked stone. Jim Garvin will look at the leaning stone and determine whether it can be plumbed without cost.
11. Chair Paulsen asked Adam Mendoza about any repairs that Public Works was able to complete at the end of 2023. Adam and others reviewed items in the Six-Year Cemetery Plan that have been completed. These include:
 - Removal of one dying maple tree in front of New North Pembroke Cemetery and pruning dead branches from the remaining two.
 - Removal of a declining multi-trunked maple tree in Pembroke Street Cemetery.
 - Pruning of low overhanging branches and surface roots of a row of white pine trees along the driveway of Pembroke Hill Cemetery; re-paving the driveway and installation of a new culvert at its entrance.
 - Completion of stone wall repairs at Pembroke Street Cemetery.
 - Staking out new lots at the rear of Pembroke Hill Cemetery.

This leaves other items to be retained on the list:

- Widen the three entrances at Evergreen Cemetery.
 - Study the possibility of re-hanging the cast iron gates at Pembroke Street Cemetery.
 - Purchase metal corner markers for the newly laid-out lots in Pembroke Hill Cemetery.
 - Carry out ground-penetrating radar scanning of areas in Buck Street Cemetery and Evergreen Cemetery where unmarked graves may exist.
 - Post the data from headstone inscriptions in all cemeteries on the town website.
 - Study the possibility of placing a gazebo at the high point of Pavilion Avenue in Evergreen Cemetery.
12. The next meeting of the Pembroke Cemetery Commission will be on Thursday, May 9, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at Public Works headquarters on Exchange Street in Suncook Village.
 13. On a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
James L. Garvin, Secretary