

FINAL

**CITY OF LEBANON
CEMETERIES GOVERNANCE TASK FORCE
Minutes, January 9, 2018
Public Works Administration Building—Conference Room
6:30 p.m.**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Tim McNamara (City Council), Doug Boisvert (Citizen Representative), Fran Hanchett (Lebanon Historical Society), Joshua Lascell (Heritage Commission), Patrick McCarthy (Funeral Home Representative), David Muzzy (Citizen Representative), Darryl Slicer (American Legion), Shane Smith (City Council), Bruce Temple (Public Works), Tina Waterman (Public Works)

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

I. CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair McNamara.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: November 30, 2017; December 16, 2017

David Muzzy moved to approve the minutes of the Lebanon Cemeteries Governance Task Force meeting of November 30, 2017 as written. Seconded by Patrick McCarthy.

**The motion passed unanimously.*

Fran Hanchett moved to approve the minutes of the Lebanon Cemeteries Governance Task Force meeting of December 16, 2017 as written. Seconded by David Muzzy.

**The motion passed unanimously.*

III. REPORT ON CEMETERY MANAGEMENT IN OTHER MUNICIPALITIES

Chair McNamara suggested discussing some of the challenges faced by the cemeteries based on the Dec. 16 visits. Ms. Waterman said she contacted the New Hampshire Cemeteries Association, who sent the request to other municipalities. Nashua's cemeteries are controlled by a Board of Aldermen; the monuments are private property. Monuments that could be safety hazards or that have aesthetic or historical value are repaired, but they do not repair broken or leaning stones. Dover has a Cemetery Board; Ms. Waterman distributed their by-laws. They provide an annual report to the City Manager and keep all of the cemetery records. The city does maintenance. All of the other municipalities she looked at have cemetery boards of trustees. Pittsfield owns the lots and sells interment rights. Many places do not deal with monument care. In Pittsfield, individuals contract to do the burials; the town does not do them. Chair McNamara said Interim City Manager Paula Maville sent him Enfield's regulations, and he will distribute them to task force members via email.

Chair McNamara said one question is whether or not to sell the plots themselves. Mr. McCarthy said in one New Jersey city, another organization controls the cemetery. They sell lots and charge \$500 for perpetual care. When someone is interred, the family is charged \$2,815 for opening, maintenance, and preservation. Chair McNamara said it would be good to know if they use the principal or just draw on the interest.

IV. DISCUSSION OF CEMETERY TOUR

V. DISCUSSION OF STATE AND LOCAL REGULATIONS PERTAINING TO CEMETERIES

Chair McNamara said there are three options: recommending that the City Council create a Board of Cemetery Trustees appointed by the Council; letting the Trustees of the Trust Funds function as a formal Cemetery Board; or asking the Council to delegate to the City Manager the responsibility of being the cemetery trustee. He said the State established regulations in 1994, and the City should have done something then. He said the Council wants the Task Force to recommend a structure and list the 10 most important things that need to be done.

Ms. Waterman said few of the websites show the level of cemetery staffing. Nashua has two cemeteries that are 33 and 40 acres, and they have four full-time workers plus summer hires. Chair McNamara said Lebanon is understaffed, and they have trouble getting summer help. Mr. Temple said the budget allocation of \$25,000 for 2018 is based on a cost of \$800-\$1,000 per grave for repairs, or 25 stones. Mr. McCarthy asked if Public Works can start repairs in the winter during down times. Mr. Temple said that is a possibility. Mr. McCarthy said there is a man in White River Junction who is willing to make metal frames for slate stones at near cost. Mr. Lascell said a lot of damage has been done with good intentions with materials that do not expand and contract. He said people must be qualified.

Chair McNamara said the task of going to court to take over abandoned plots only applies to municipalities taking over private cemeteries, not individual plots in City-owned cemeteries. He said they need to determine how to prioritize graves. Mr. McCarthy said they could set up a trust fund for other repairs. Chair McNamara said they would have to determine how to raise money. There are two issues: individual graves and the overall look of the cemeteries. Mr. Lascell said they need an inventory of stones that have been compromised. Ms. Hanchett said she has photos of all of them online at Find A Grave. Members discussed doing repairs section by section, possibly dealing with “leaners” first before they become broken, and hiring a sexton. Chair McNamara said adding a FTE would be difficult. They discussed training volunteers to deal with “leaners,” possibly with two Saturday sessions to train the trainers. Grant funds are hard to come by, except perhaps if they are tied to a specific historical person. Chair McNamara said School Street Cemetery is in the worst shape. Mr. Temple said there is also money in the budget for trimming dangerous trees, painting, and replacing the roof on the building in Valley Cemetery.

Ms. Hanchett said there was a huge stone leaning in Glenwood Cemetery that fell. It could be a liability if a stone tips over and hits someone. Mr. Temple said an inventory and condition assessment in a database is important for a long-term plan. Chair McNamara said that should include the grave condition, the cemetery, the age, whether it is granite or slate, the plot, and the

name, and that should be combined with Ms. Hanchett's photos. Mr. Smith said they could do the inventory section by section and do a visual representation with an aerial photo. That could be part of the City's GIS system. He said it is important to fix impending problems before they get worse, so perhaps they should start with the leaners. Chair McNamara said they could start a rolling inventory while looking for leaners they can fix at minimal cost.

Chair McNamara said at the next meeting, they could decide which sections to do first. Regarding the condition of the grass, they could contact UNH Extension for soil tests and fertilizer suggestions. Some buildings are in terrible condition. Mr. Smith said they should look at the rates. Mr. McCarthy reviewed some prices at area cemeteries. Ms. Waterman said they should charge more for winter burials. Mr. McCarthy said they could increase the opening fee and use some for a maintenance and preservation fund. Ms. Waterman will check on rates elsewhere. They could look at different ways to sell plots, based on the increased preference for cremation. Mr. McCarthy said he has information about a company that sells niche structures that will allow 64 sets of cremated remains to fit on one grave site.

Chair McNamara asked about building priorities. Mr. Temple said they include the brick building at School Street, Valley Cemetery, and the fountain at Glenwood. They always need fence work, as well as the Wood plots. Mr. Boisvert mentioned the Guarino tomb in West Lebanon. Chair McNamara said the Task Force should recommend a capital improvements plan for five or 10 years. Mr. Smith asked if it is better to pull up downed or broken stones or store them so they are off the ground. Mr. McCarthy said they should be left where they are. He said in some cases, it will be better to replace stones with flat grass markers if they cannot be read. Chair McNamara said they should think about how best to accomplish the trustee situation.

VI. SET DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Feb. 6 at 6:30 p.m.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Fran Hanchett moved for adjournment. Seconded by Doug Boisvert.

****The motion passed unanimously.***

The meeting was adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles Glazer
Recording Secretary