

FINAL

**CITY OF LEBANON
CEMETERIES GOVERNANCE TASK FORCE
Minutes, February 6, 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), Wayne Aldridge (American Legion), Bruce Temple (Public Works), Tina Waterman (Public Works)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Shane Smith (City Council)

I. CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 6:28 p.m. by Chair McNamara.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: January 9, 2018

Changes to January minutes: page 2, line 25, add “slate” before “stones”; page 2, line 43-44, change “is” to “was”, replace “Glenwood Cemetery, and it could be a liability if it tips” with “Glenwood Cemetery that fell. It could be a liability if a stone tips”; page 3, line 18, replace “Mt. Calvary” with “Glenwood”.

Doug Boisvert moved to approve the minutes of the Lebanon Cemeteries Governance Task Force meeting of January 9, 2018 as amended. Seconded by David Muzzy.

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

III. DISCUSSION OF RECOMMENDATION FOR BOARD OF CEMETERY TRUSTEES

Chair McNamara noted that the Task Force has had four meetings and that they have made good progress in understanding the current situation as well as state laws. He asked the Task Force whether they felt they were in a good position to make a recommendation regarding composition of the Cemetery Board of Trustees. Chair McNamara said he believes there is an advantage to getting this on the City Council’s agenda early in the year so that a new board could do some meaningful work before Veterans Day.

The three options for a future Cemetery Board of Trustees

- 1- City Council appoints a Cemetery Board of Trustees
- 2- City Council appoints the City Manager to handle cemeteries from an administrative standpoint without a citizen’s board in place

- 3- The existing trustees and trust fund are given the additional duty of being the Board of Trustees

The Task Force indicated they are ready to proceed with recommendations.

Patrick McCarthy moved that the recommendation of the Cemetery Governance Task Force be that the City Council fulfill the obligation that the State requires by appointing a Cemetery Board of Trustees. Seconded by Wayne Aldridge.

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

III. DISCUSSION OF CEMETERY MAINTENANCE PRIORITIES

Chair McNamara said he would like the Task Force to come up with a short list of things that the Cemetery Board of Trustees should undertake immediately as their first priorities. Using the list of recommendations that was identified in previous meetings, Chair McNamara asked that each person give their top recommendations.

Ms. Hanchett said the priorities should be straightening older stones first as a preventative, amending City fees to align with other cemeteries in the area which would need a Council vote, deciding how the City wants to sell the lots (interment vs. selling lot), repairing the worst section of School Street with the worst section being halfway down on the right toward the end of the cemetery, and preparing the detailed damages to include graphic imaging. Ms. Waterman noted that Mark Goodwin has already done some imaging on the cemeteries and integrated them into the cemetery management software.

Mr. Lascell said the priorities should be to create an inventory and condition assessment as a basis for moving forward and make sure that the Board seeks input from subject matter experts, especially in matters of restoration and historic preservation. Mr. Lascell said he believes that the inventory and condition assessment is a critical priority and is essential for good planning.

Mr. Muzzy said that the priorities should be to make sure that the structures are up to code and that spaces are safe and usable. If stones are moved for maintenance, there needs to be a place to store them. Ms. Hanchett voiced concern over moving stones and Chair McNamara said that the group should come back to the question of maintenance, which remains an open topic. Mr. Muzzy also identified the mapping as a priority for planning. Ms. Waterman noted that existing imaging is partially at the lot level, partially at the grave level. Chair McNamara said that a benefit of the imaging is that it can be added to over time.

Mr. McCarthy said that the priorities should be to continue to build the inventory database, having a sexton and a Board of Trustees, updating the fees, and creating a trust for maintenance and preservation. Chair McNamara asked for clarification on a trust for maintenance and preservation. Mr. McCarthy has been in contact with other cemeteries and surrounding states that are building trusts in addition to the perpetual care fees. In some instances, cemeteries become the responsibility of the City but do not come with funds to maintain them. Chair McNamara asked the group to consider how to strike a balance between affordability and the cost to maintain the grave. Mr. Boisvert said that Lebanon's fees are currently among the cheapest in the

state of New Hampshire. Mr. McCarthy said that there are issues over time related to sink holes and foundation failures. As an example, foundation fees are \$150 in Lebanon and \$550 in Hanover. Chair McNamara summarized that the fees considered are a purchase fee, perpetual care fee, interment fee, and a maintenance and preservation fee that is payable half at purchase and half upon interment. Mr. McCarthy said that a lot currently includes one full burial and five cremations or six cremations which creates the potential for six markers which must be maintained. He would recommend that the maintenance and preservation fee be charged per burial. Ms. Hanchett noted that different cities have different rules for the number of burials per lot, and many have four. The group noted that Lebanon is close to the top with six. Chair McNamara asked whether the Task Force should recommend to the Board of Trustees that the amount of burials should be reconsidered. Mr. McCarthy noted that lots are 4-5 feet wide and in some cases markers are border to border and many of the Task Force members voiced support in considering a reduction of the burials per lot. Mr. Temple said that there are presently 3,500 burials now and that new burials are low at 50-60 a year. The incremental step to get more money is a good step forward but won't solve financial issues right now. Mr. Temple said that large steps in fees will be a hurdle, given that this will be a sensitive topic. Mr. Lascell agreed that the current issues won't be solved by burial fees alone and suggested that alternate funding sources be explored by the new Board of Trustees.

Mr. McCarthy presented information that he gathered regarding granite niches. The most popular styles offered by Wilbert Memorials are a hex shape and a rectangle. Wilbert Memorials does the installation and the concrete pad for \$25,000 and each granite structure takes up approximately a plot and a half worth of space. The average New England selling price for a single niche is \$1,500 each and Wilbert recommended \$800 each. One niche can hold two people. The revenue from 72 niches at \$800 each would be \$57,600. Opening fees would be \$300 per niche, or \$21,600 for 72 niches, and that could be double, because there is a two-person capacity per niche, which would bring in another \$21,600. Engraving is an additional \$300, or \$21,600. Total income would be \$108,000 for single interments per niche and approximately \$122,000 if there are two in a niche. Deducting the \$25,000 investment, there is an expected profit of \$75,000 for using a plot and a half worth of space. Mr. McCarthy also added that 70% of the volume that he sees is for cremations, although he services different towns and not all of them are going to a cemetery. Mr. McCarthy spoke with Craig (from Wilbert) and they offer site planning free of charge. Chair McNamara said that one niche per cemetery could generate a lot more revenue than it costs to maintain it, a potential way to transition some of the cemeteries to alternatives to conventional burials. The Task Force agreed that providing alternatives to the community was a good idea. Ms. Waterman said to start small and see if it could expand. People tend to prefer Glenwood and this might be a way to make more room.

Mr. Boisvert said that first priority is establishing the Board of Trustees, getting more manpower and hiring a sexton, then establishing rules and regulations. He said that hiring a full-time sexton is important.

Mr. Aldridge agrees that a sexton is important but the next priority should be #7 on the list of recommendations and should include GIS. He feels that #3 & #4 on the list of recommendations should be combined as both address similar issues regarding maintenance and repairs.

Chair McNamara summarized the priorities of the Task Force as planning tools and GIS being a high priority, staffing issues including sexton, fee updates, alternative funding, alternative interment (niches), taking care of maintenance issues especially leaning stones, undertaking a small but doable project to make a visual difference, and taking a look at issues with buildings. Ms. Hanchett reiterated that simple maintenance is important, as is preventing liability issues. Mr. Temple said that tree removal is also an issue, especially at School Street, and that he would like Trustee support since dead trees are expensive and can cause thousands of dollars to fix. The Task Force agrees that they are dangerous and expensive.

Chair McNamara said there are a lot of questions regarding a sexton and whether should they be FTE. He would support a FTE for sexton to also include upgrading landscapes and be on top of landscaping improvements. Ms. Hanchett asked whether there is anyone currently attending the seminar in Concord and there is not. Mr. Temple said that Councilor Hill had been talking about entry way beautification and there are some issues around special trees. The sexton may be able to facilitate beautification efforts. Chair McNamara suggested that it might be beneficial to have a specialist that could offer suggestions on how to improve the landscaping and increase efficiency, elevating the position to include turf and landscape management, rather than simply routine maintenance.

The Task Force said that based on discussions with Public Works, staffing is a major issue and not only is additional staffing required, but additional supervisory staff in the form of a sexton is important. Seasonal help and consistency of help could be an issue. Compensation should also be at a level that ensures consistently good seasonal help. This is a multiyear problem but the incremental changes over time can make a real difference. Chair McNamara will take the staffing challenges and concerns to the Council.

Ms. Hanchett said that cemeteries should be locked from dusk to dawn, at least to vehicular traffic- Glenwood has a large gate, West Lebanon could have a chain at the front and there is a gate at the back, Valley is the most difficult. School Street is the worst but there is little that can be done because much of it is walking traffic. Chair McNamara asked if the Task Force should recommend to the Trustees that added security might deter vandalism. It used to be done by police but not any longer. Mr. Temple recommended a thorough review of the ordinance so that the police could have something to refer to. Ms. Waterman asked if the new Board of Trustees would be coming up with a cemetery master plan and Chair McNamara said that the Task Force's recommendations would be used as part of their charter. Many of the recommendations are under \$50K and can be done using the operations budget.

Chair McNamara asked if anyone is interested in serving on the Board of Trustees or if the Task Force had any recommendations for potential members. He recommends a cap of seven to nine but more than five. Mr. Temple recommended three from each ward so there is a potential for equal representation for ideal composition. Ms. Hanchett asked if there are any restrictions for family members serving on the same Board. Chair McNamara didn't think so but thought that they should ask Deputy City Manager Paula Maville; he will double check and get back to the Task Force.

Chair McNamara will send out a summary for review and get feedback so that hopefully this could be put before the Council in March.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

***Patrick McCarthy moved for adjournment. Seconded by Wayne Aldridge.
*The motion passed unanimously.***

The meeting was adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brandy Sailors-Dow
Recording Secretary