



SPRING GROVE CEMETERY TRUSTEES MINUTES February 16, 2016

Present: Jack Bigelow, Sandra Dearborn, William Canane, Robert Goodwin,
Gail Ralston

Also Present: Paul Sanborn, Superintendent of Parks & Grounds, Forestry and
Cemetery and five Andover residents: Diane DeLucia, Susan May, Jim Greer,
Robert Whidden, Lois Whidden

Jack called the meeting to order at 6:38 PM

Introductions

- The meeting started with brief introductions of all present.

Resident concerns and input

- The Andover residents present at the meeting explained that they were there to discuss the issues of unleashed and unruly dogs at the cemetery as published in recent Andover Townsman and Eagle Tribune articles written by Terry Date.
- Diane DeLucia started the discussion on behalf of the residents and the following points were then raised and discussed amongst the residents and the Trustees:
 - That she has never witnessed dogs fighting at the cemetery.
 - That she and the other dog walkers would like to maintain their rights to walk their dogs in the cemetery.
 - That she and the other dog walkers believe that their presence in the cemetery is advantageous, as they are a set of eyes and ears when the cemetery staff are not present, and that they have called the authorities on occasions when they observed something to be amiss.
 - That they believe there to be two or three “repeat offenders” in regards to unleashed dogs and that one of the offenders, who was not present at the meeting, stated in an email to Ms. DeLucia that she had not previously understood that dogs were required to be leashed. It was also mentioned that the repeat offenders seem to have a pretty regular schedule and that regularity may make enforcement more possible.
 - That the dog walkers are interested and willing to be a part of the solution in regards to unleashed dogs.
 - That a ban on dogs at the cemetery would be difficult to enforce, just as the leashing of dogs and curbing of dogs has proved difficult to enforce.
 - That the newspaper articles mentioned above stated that bicycles are a problem in the cemetery as well. Sandra believes that they were mentioned in the article because they had been mentioned in the same minutes from previous meetings when discussions took place about dogs in the cemetery.
 - Sandra explained that the surprise approach of an unleashed dog could cause a person to lose their balance, particularly if on a grassy surface, such as at a grave site.

- Susan May mentioned the new signs that had recently been installed at the entrances. It was agreed that they are a good idea, but that it's too soon to know if they will be effective. Ms. May asked what the dog walkers could do to help with the issue.
- Paul Sanborn told the residents that they can reach the Working Foreman by telephone as well as by stopping in at the cemetery office during working hours if they observe an issue in progress.
- Bill suggested that the residents not approach the offenders as a confrontation could result.
- Ms. DeLucia expressed a desire to draft a rebuttal, jointly with the Trustees, to the recent newspaper articles, stating that the Trustees and residents had met, and outline some solutions moving forward. Jack stated that he did not feel the Trustees should be a part of drafting that rebuttal. Mr. Greer agreed.
- The idea of reporting license plate numbers of offenders or other suspicious activity was raised and briefly discussed.
- Ms. DeLucia stated that the cemetery staff know many of the dog walkers and then discussion turned back to issues of enforcement; not only of unleashed dogs, but of speeding and other non-compliance issues such as not removing flowers from graves by a specified date.
- Jack asked Paul about the possibility of installing security cameras at the cemetery. Paul felt that should be reserved as a last resort.
- The cemetery at West Parish was brought up. Mr. Greer stated that he had never seen a dog at West Parish cemetery. Gail said that it is posted that dogs are not allowed, but that both she and Paul have talked with the management there and have been told that dogs in the cemetery are not enforced unless they are unleashed.
- Sandra said that she had looked back at the meeting minutes since as far back as 2007 and that the dog issue has been being discussed since 2008.
- Sandra and Bill told the residents that they want to ban dogs at the cemetery. Ms. DeLucia then asked if skateboarders and bikers would also be banned, if dogs were banned, and the issue of enforcement was raised again.
- Gail shared her thoughts:
 - That during a visit to the cemetery she witnessed an unleashed dog. She asked the owner of the dog to leash the dog and the owner complied right away. She feels the decision of whether or not to approach an owner with an unleashed dog should be a personal decision.
 - That she likes the idea of the resident dog walkers being the eyes and ears for the Trustees and would like to give them some sort of ID and official recognition. Furthermore, she feels there should be a liaison between the Trustees and the dog walkers.
 - That she feels a sandwich board be set up at the three cemetery entrances on days when a funeral or services will be taking place indicating that dogs are not allowed at that time due to services being conducted. She asked Paul whether he felt it was enough to post signs at these three entrances.

- Bill asked that he be put on record as asking the dog walkers to please not approach other dog walkers for reasons of personal safety.
- Discussion continued about matters of safety issues from unleashed dogs and difficulties of enforcement.
- Ms. DeLucia stated that she feels the potential of drug deals pose more of a safety issue than the dog walkers.
- Mr. Greer expressed that he feels it is a privilege to walk his dogs at the cemetery, but will respect the decision of the Trustees with respect to dogs.
- Ms. DeLucia raised the point that there had been no word from anybody with respect to supporting the prospective ban of dogs as was raised in the newspaper articles.

(The resident dog walkers left the meeting at 7:35pm.)

Continued discussion on the matter of dogs in the cemetery

- Discussion continued on the matter of dogs in the cemetery and the following was noted:
 - Sandra brought up again that the matter has been being discussed for several years and distributed handouts with excerpts of the minutes from meetings. She also distributed a handout about how other cemeteries handle the issue of dogs.
 - Sandra and Bill asked to go on the record as stating that they do not feel dogs should be allowed in the cemetery. Sandra stated that she believes her responsibility as a Trustee is to the families of the deceased and not the dogwalkers. She and Bill both expressed that the cemetery should be a quiet and contemplative place for people to visit, reflect and grieve their loved ones.

(Gail had to leave the meeting at 7:45pm to present at another meeting being held in the building.)

- Jack expressed his desire to end the meeting at this point. Sandra motioned to continue the meeting, Bill seconded. The Trustees voted to continue the meeting.
 - The discussion went back and forth about the issue of dogs in the cemetery.
 - Jack asked Sandra and Bill about a Citizen's Petition. Sandra answered that the Town Clerk told Sandra, Bill and Wayne Nader (the Animal Control Officer) that the Trustees have the authority to prohibit dogs from the cemetery without having to present a Citizen's Petition.
 - Bill said that the Town Clerk told them that they can legally enforce prohibiting dogs in the cemetery just as they can legally enforce leashing dogs in the cemetery.

Financials

- Financials were not reviewed or discussed and were tabled until the next meeting.

Minutes

- Minutes of the previous meetings were not reviewed or discussed and were tabled until the next meeting.

Cemetery GIS update

- The Public Facing site is ready to go live. The Trustees voted to publish the link for use by the general public.

New Business

- Sandra discussed an article she read in the October 28, 2015 Eagle Tribune that the Ridgewood Cemetery in North Andover had just been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. She also mentioned that once you are on the register you can apply for grant money to be used for cemetery improvements.
(Paul Sanborn left the meeting at 8:07pm.)
- Sandra distributed to the Trustees documentation that the Spring Grove Cemetery is on the National Historic Register. As such, she suggested that the Trustees pursue grant monies for cemetery improvements such as replacing some granite curbing as an example.
- Sandra is on the Board of the Andover Home for the Aged and mentioned that they own 10 lots in Spring Grove Cemetery but that only three people have been buried there. She wanted the Trustees to know about this as there may be people who meet the Andover Home for the Aged's criteria who may need a grave but cannot afford one. She also told the Trustees that the Andover Home for Aged Board was wondering if the Trustees would like to write a letter to the Andover Funeral Home directors to make them aware that these lots are available. Jack agreed that the Trustees could write such a letter. Sandra will follow up with the board at the Andover Home for the Aged.
- A resident who is enrolled in the Flower Fund reached out to Sandra to report that last year his loved one's grave did not have flowers placed upon it for the Memorial Day holiday. The Flower Fund that had been established back in 1963 for the purpose of placing flowers annually at the graves of those who were enrolled in the fund. Sandra had minutes from a September 17, 2007 meeting where a status of the fund was given by the Town Treasurer, David Reilly. Sandra will give a copy of those minutes to the Plant & Facilities division to look into the fund and to request an updated status to ensure it will be taken care of this Memorial Day.

Staff Report

- There was no Staff Report given at this meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20pm

Next meeting is Tuesday, March 8th at 6:30pm in the Plant & Facilities conference room.