Cemetery Commission Minutes June 27, 2013

Present:
Cathy Morrison, Bill Davis, Joyce Stevens, Wayne Printz
Excused:
Betty McGahey, Raymond Mowbray
Guests:
Karen Jones, Lester Seal
Staff:
Charlotte Shifflett – Cemetery Director, and Amber Cubbage – Assistant

The meeting began by Pledging Allegiance to the Flag followed by devotions led by Charlotte Shifflett.

- Chair Davis proceeded with the meeting by advising members that Hazel Simmons wished to submit her name as a candidate to serve on the Cemetery Commission.
- Mrs. Jones and Mr. Seal were given an opportunity to relay to commissioners their reasons for wanting to serve.

Lester Seal
19241 Seal Ln
Elkton, VA

- Lester considers himself to be an Elktonian, although he lives outside town boundaries near the Furnace Church. He is invested in the cemetery and owns lot there. In addition, he has family members who are interred in Elk Run Cemetery.

Karen Jones
North St
Elkton, VA 22827

- Karen is a lifetime resident of Elkton and is very much interested in what has been accomplished in the cemetery. She sees major differences in the overall appearance of Elk Run. Karen's family owns lots there as well. She is interested in the historical facts and feels that it represents our community.
- Bill Davis relayed that lots of work is required to upkeep the cemetery. The caretaker needs 40 hours just to mow. He hopes to get some help with the trimming. Earlier this year a discussion was held regarding part-time help and a job description.
- Councilman Printz didn't agree with using part-time help to mow or trim in that department. He agrees there is a tremendous work load and the caretaker definitely needs help but believes we do not need to hire anyone. Maintenance crew should be able to mow. It remains a sensitive issue and he admitted he has not become as attentive as he should have been but Bill Davis has been involved.
- Charlotte noted that rainy weather has affected the mowing this year.
- Lester suggested that detainees may be useful.
- Bill stated that they have had reasons not to come lately.
- Printz feels the state has monopolized their free labor but suggested we try again.
- Charlotte wondered if personnel took the wages seriously regarding permanent part-time help. Donnie left for better pay and she was unable to offer him a competitive raise.
- Printz asked if there is a chance Donnie will come back?

Kite Will

- Mary Elizabeth Kite left money to the Elk Run Cemetery in her late will. Chairman Davis would like to see a nice restroom constructed and built to blend in with the surroundings. It doesn't need to remain open all the time. Several parking spots need to be set aside.

Old Business

Bill Davis began by reviewing items from last month's meeting.

- The Commission voted and gave permission to Bobby Eppard to cut down a tree located in the newest parcel of the cemetery. An official letter has been written to Bobby Eppard advising him to haul the remains, such as brush and firewood, but has not been completed yet. The tree was so large in diameter that a 36" blade was used to cut it up. Bobby has spent approximately $200.00 in expenses in an attempt to remove the remainder.
- Printz wondered if 30 days was ample time for removal?
- Charlotte wrote the letters advising Mr. Eppard he needed to complete the removal but was unsure how seriously he took the comments.
- Bill will put the pressure on Bobby. If not gone within 60 days it will be given to someone to burn in a wood stove.

New Business

- Candidates were interviewed and/or submitted their names to fill the vacancies' open due to Mrs. Nicholson's resignation and Gerald Monger's death.
- There have not been enough donations to put up anymore fencing. Total collected this year has been $200.00. Cathy questioned how much we need to place another portion? Charlotte noted about $11,000.00 They both felt it would take at least that amount to implement construction .
- The opening and closing fees collected currently go into the general funds account. It was discussed that customers inquire if they may pay the open/close fees in advance. When someone dies it becomes quite a struggle for some families to obtain $600.00 for grave site and an additional $400.00 for open/close fees. Very infrequently, the fee is waived in order to bury the person with some dignity.
- Pathforward:
  Have Councilman Printz take this motion to July Council meeting.
- *Discussed that if a person wished to pay for opening and closing fees ahead of time they should be able to do that. The funeral homes also lets customers prepay for funerals but at this time are not collecting our opening and closing fees. We should be able to provide some type of documentation to the customers wanting to prepay.*
  Cathy Morrison made a motion to allow owners to prepay the opening and closing in advance, seconded by Betty McGahey.
  Voice Vote 3-0
  Betty McGahey, Cathy Morrison, Raymond Mowbray
  Motion Carried

- Need a figure released on funds remaining in the Perpetual Care Account. Staff has been continuing to sell graves at a good pace.

Metal Markers

- The caretaker would like to see metal markers removed after stones are placed. It would definitely improve mowing time.
- Flags were placed on veteran's graves on Memorial Day and normally are left until the 4th of July is celebrated. There were some issues with their placement this year. Some are even in the center of grave spaces rather than at the stone. Bill Davis confirmed this fact.
- Flowers are potentially expected to be changed each season but this does not happen in a lot of cases. A lot of faded Christmas flowers remain this year. Although, the by-laws state they may be removed it must be done with caution.
- Printz reiterated the point about removing mementos and/or flowers and placing them in a big pile. These items are left by loved ones and come from deep within a person's soul. This action has been taken in the past and brought an outcry from the public.
- We want our cemetery to look nice and neat but we definitely do not find this practice on all lots.
- Members want to proceed with the removal of the metal markers when the stone is set. The monument companies may be willing to remove these and return to the cemetery office for distribution to the family if they want them.

Pathforward:

1. If a motion is made and approved the Director will request the vendor to remove metal marker when setting of stone is complete.
2. The Director should notify the family by letter due to sensitivity. Our goal is to make our cemetery the nicest in Rockingham County.
3. Councilman Printz agrees regarding the markers and flowers but feels it should be left to the people.

Cathy Morrison made a motion to remove holiday flowers and arrangements after they become faded and tattered, unless they are secured in vases attached to stones, or placed near the headstone and not in the way of mowing as noted in the by-laws. Cathy continued by noting "She would like to see vendors remove markers and notify the buyer of this practice when the purchase is made and give the family an opportunity to save it as a memento. This motion was seconded by Joyce Stevens.

Voice Vote 3-0
Cathy Morrison, Bill Davis, Joyce Stevens
Motion Carried

Mulberry Tree

The mulberry tree located in the eastern end of the cemetery is providing lots of bird food, which is being deposited throughout the cemetery. Many small trees are growing up beside the stones and need to be removed. Perhaps if they grow too big they may need to be snaked out of the ground.

1. Mr. Davis suggested we get quotes for a price to cut down the tree.
2. Printz wants to involve Council due to the sensitivity of the issue.
3. Mr. Davis agrees with notifying Council before any further action is taken.

Equipment
Public Works Department and the Cemetery are in the process of purchasing a new piece of equipment to dig graves. The new one will be much smaller than the backhoe and should prevent less damage when digging a grave.

Printz made a motion to get prices and advise town, seconded by Joyce Stevens.
Voice Vote 3-0
Cathy Morrison, Bill Davis, Joyce Stevens
Motion Carried

- Davis advised members there is no procedure in place on how to collect and deposit fees as collected.
- Charlotte reiterated that no documentation exists for collection of fees. Council will need to approve before anything can be implemented.
- Davis feels the $400.00 is sufficient for a burial.
- Printz supports the idea due to the fact many worries arise when death occurs, especially for the unexpected and uninsured.
- Charlotte noted that some people pay with their credit card.
- A member inquired if fees are the same for non-residents of Elkton?
- Mrs. Stevens feels family members should have the option to dig a hole for cremations, simply because some loved ones can and want to do it as a last gesture for someone.
- Printz wondered what is the procedure to buy and pay for spaces? Is anyone allowed to make payments?
- Charlotte noted that all grave sales are paid in full. The funeral home collects open/close fees in full and mails them to her attention.
- A member questioned the credit/debit card procedures. She was under the impression information cannot be taken over the phone.
- Printz would like to see technology move forward and set up online payment for town services including electric bills.
- Mrs. Stevens would like to see a regular dispersal of cemetery fund totals shared at every meeting. Perpetual Care funds should be available to get the amount deposited. In addition, how many CD's are in existence along with the totals?
- Cemetery Director has not seen a total but will have one for the next meeting.
- Mr. Davis believes this issue is worthwhile to discuss with the town attorney.
- Printz wants to know the problem with getting an amount? He expressed that he believes all cemetery fees collected should remain in a cemetery account versus going into the general fund.
- Davis is concerned that Council supports this procedure.
- Mrs. Morrison feels the money collected for open/close fees should not go into the general fund and be spent without explanation. Her feelings tell her that the cemetery is not there to be making money to support the town.
- Printz asked Charlotte how funds are broken down? She explained that the open/close fees are placed in general fund and are subtracted from the total budget amount after the auditors complete their paperwork annually. The graves sales

are deposited with $100.00 going into real estate and the remaining $500.00 going into perpetual care funds.

- Davis stated "if all commissions were run like the cemetery commission then it wouldn't be a problem. In the future when considering raising rates we need to consider the people who are our first priority."
- If someone passes thru the area and wants to purchase a $600.00 lot or maybe more; is there a maximum as to how many spaces may be purchased? We want to make sure this does not happen because it could become profitable for someone.
- Mrs. Stevens suggested the commission request the town to have two regular part-time employees to keep up with the mowing.
- Printz emotionally noted that he wants his family and friends to be buried in Elk Run Cemetery. He believes that in and out of town should be a different price.

  He recalled the beautiful flowering trees that once lined S Stuart Avenue. They were the property of Dr. Brown, who chose to have them removed. Printz's vision is to see some beautiful trees lining the roadways in the cemetery. He prefers not to disturb the few trees we have there now but would like to see some planted in the near future.

  We are involved in an emotional and caring business and would like to add to good feelings by taking into consideration what we already have and make improvements.

Cathy Morrison made a motion to adjourn the regular meeting, seconded by Joyce Stevens.

Voice Vote 3-0

Cathy Morrison, Bill Davis, Joyce Stevens

Motion Carried

Candidate Discussion

The guests were dismissed and the members began their discussion relative to recommending new candidates for open positions on the commission.

- Davis inquired as to how members felt about supporting the two candidates that attended the meeting? He was concerned that the other two failed to show up tonight. However, Dearing was on vacation and was excused, while Merica had an emergency to deal with. Mr. Davis advised the group that Hazel Simmons had agreed to accept a position on the commission bringing the total candidates to five.
- Printz supported the two candidates that attended and is aware that politics may be involved for some candidates. His goal is to help in any way he can and give all his efforts on behalf of the town. The two candidates not at the meeting had their names submitted quite some time ago.
- Davis stated that Mrs. Nicholson's resignation and Gerald's death opened up two positions. He feels Raymond's position may be open soon due to health reasons.
- Charlotte is not sure if we are limited to seven members.
- In fairness to all candidates, Printz would like to consider all five while Morrison, Davis and Stevens want to go ahead and vote tonight.

- Morrison made a point to acknowledge that she is dissatisfied the way the former caretaker and family treated the Cemetery Director and other members when the town took over the mowing and grave digging in 2009. She feels Mr. Dearing has a lot of knowledge but expressed concern he may run for public office next election and leave a vacancy.
- Davis is somewhat unhappy with Mr. Dearing as a candidate. Too political.
- Printz felt that currently, the commission has five active members, list the five names submitted and allow Town Council to pick them. The problem clears up and we are following policy by sending all the names for consideration.
- Morrison does not want five names presented.
- Printz advised it will cause problems because most residents want Lee to serve.
- Davis spoke by noting we need bodies and agrees that some are very knowledgeable.
- However, Councilman Printz wants everyone to agree and he will take the names before council.
- Davis does not want the five names taken before council and suggests that he call Betty McGahey and others to get their feel for handling the situation.
- Printz is concerned about contacting Raymond due to health issues.
- Davis will call and contact Printz with the names that are chosen.
- Printz understands the members feelings regarding attacks and verbal confrontations endured during the town takeover of the cemetery but wants people to know that Mr. Merica is willing to give to the poor. He agreed with proceeding to do the polling and he will take the names before council; but he admitted he still feels the issue has become political.
- Several members expressed concern as to where the commission stands with Mr. Merica since he does not communicate with them.
- Davis was more concerned about the parents reaction when the town took over the mowing; especially Buddy Merica's wife.
- Cathy noted that caretakers and nurses start out to do exceptionally good but after awhile you cut corners.
- Printz suggested getting back to the subject of the mowing--- the issue is that Bobby Eppard is overwhelmed with the mowing and trimming due to all the rain we are having.
- Davis thinks it takes as long to weed eat as it does to mow. Donnie Eppard worked 60 hours some weeks to catch up and just turned in comp hours on rainy days.
- Charlotte noted that Bobby Eppard does not want to work more than a 40 hour week. He is allowed to flex time if he happens to work beyond 40 hrs.
- Printz questioned if there are any reports of damaged stones?
- Charlotte replied "Mr. Eppard is trustworthy and has called me on several occasions to report damage he has observed". She feels certain he will call if something is damaged.
- Printz left the meeting and was still bothered regarding the prospective of presenting Karen Jones and Lester Seal as candidates while leaving out the other three contenders; Lee Dearing, Ronnie Merica and Hazel Simmons.

This concluded the meeting. Unless a special meeting is scheduled for some reason, the next regular meeting will be held September 2013 at the Council Chambers located in the Elkton Area Community Center.

Submitted by:
Charlotte and Amber