Elkton Cemetery Commission Meeting

Feb. 15, 2018

Present: Cathy Morrison, Karen Jones, Chuck Morris, Betty McGahey

Excused: Lester Seal, Lee Dearing, Steve America, Bill Davis

Administrative: **Charlotte** Shifflett

Guest: Troy Shifflett

Pledge of Allegiance: All in attendance joined in reciting the pledge.

Devotions: Charlotte held devotions.

Cathy Morrison/Vice Chair called the meeting to order @ 6:00 pm.

Meeting Minutes
Karen Jones made a motion to accept the January 18, 2018 minutes as written, seconded by Chuck Morris
Voice Vote **4-0**
Cathy Morrison, Karen Jones, Chuck Morris, Betty McGahey

Motion Carried

Old Business

I. By-Laws:

a Distributed By-Laws {Revision September 12, 2017}
b. Betty McGahey submitted her resignation, effective immediately.
c. An elder lady wants to pay to have her older marker cleaned; what would be a fair price to charge? The town is too busy to take on another project.

Some cleaners include:

1) tooth paste applied and removed with a brush
2) shaving cream applied and removed with a brush
3) simple green solution
4) warm soapy water

Charlotte will contact a memorial company and obtain a quote.

II. Cemetery Rules
Karen Jones followed up on a request she accepted at the last cemetery commission meeting; check with local cemeteries personnel and find out if they allow owners to place objects and flowers (not in vases or on a stone) on lots during mowing season.

a. Mt Olivet/McGaheysville, East Lawn/Harrisonburg and Woodbine/Harrisonburg do not allow owners to mow their lots nor place knick knacks on bases around the memorial stone. No flowers may be stuck in the ground.
b. Regarding care for gravesites, Perpetual Care is provided thru an agreement with the owner by having a Deed stating this service. *(Blank deed attached)*

c. One member believes disrespect for all lot owners is out-of-control by allowing all the flowers and knick knacks to be located on the graves. She expressed the fact she knows of an instance where a mower's foot slipped off the control and the mower threw about objects. This is now becoming a safety issue.
d. On the flip side of the coin; an owner reported 3 battery lit, expensive, small decorative Christmas trees were missing and they never turned up.
e. Troy Shifflett intervened to note the town does not allow anyone other than town staff to dig graves any longer, due to liability purposes.
f. The revenue collected for the town for grave digging averages approximately between $16,000 and $20,000 annually.
g. The town and staff do care about your loved ones and do their utmost to keep our cemetery in very good condition.

Discussion on Mowing

Troy Shifflett/Public Works Director, for the town, was asked for an opinion on owners keeping their lots mowed.

a. He took the opportunity to speak advising commission members the objects placed on graves during mowing season present a danger to his mowers.
b. In addition to the objects he noted the purple flags are an issue. When you ride a mower you easily miss seeing these flags and mow the lot before you realize it was purple flagged. People become agitated when this happens. Just additional complaints to be addressed by authorized individuals
c. Different people have different views and emotions where this subject is concerned. While its clear some owners desire to have mementos other owners do not want to them cluttering their adjacent gravesite. This issue has always been a sore subject and sows discord among owners, and even town management frequently.
d. This practice should no longer be acceptable in our cemetery due to:
    1) Threats/complaints' directed towards staff.
    2) Some lots not maintained in a timely manner
    3) It looks bad when the grass is not uniform after mowing.
    4) Data collected from other cemeteries do not allow this practice.
    5) Placing gravel on an entire space is a very bad idea. After a while the grass grows thru and they are thrown by weed eaters.
    6) Who is responsible for costs incurred if any of these actually happen?
    7) Should those persons who insist on mowing their lots sign a waiver releasing the town from any unforeseen incidents?
    8) These issues need to be addressed out of ultimate respect to all owners, although it creates animosity because of different opinions.

Karen Jones, seconded by Chuck Morris, made a recommendation to take away self-mowing rights, along with placement of purple flags and forward to Elkton Town Council.

Voice Vote 4-0
Cathy Morrison, Karen Jones, Chuck Morris, Betty McGahey

Motion Carried

Resignation:

The meeting continued with Cathy Morrison/Vice Chair *"thanking"* Betty McGahey for serving on the commission for over 30 years. Other members of the board gave her uplifting comments.

Mrs. McGahey responded by expressing what a pleasure it had been to serve along with some great people. She has seen many changes take place in the cemetery during her tenure and will always be proud she could serve and be a part of making thing better. We will surely miss her smile in addition to the chocolate fudge she brought to the meetings.

Building Break In:

Troy informed members the chain and lock had been sawed into and someone had entered the utility building located in the cemetery. Nothing was missing but the only reason was the equipment, with the exception of the mowers, had been taken to the shop for preventative maintenance.

Bathrooms

Members do not want the bathroom construction idea to be forgotten. Troy Shifflett asked permission to offer an option on raising money for the proposed Bathroom/Visitors Vestibule, a section where the public can browse while reviewing maps, Interment Lists, and History of the cemetery etc.

Public works staff could be responsible to construct the building and save toward labor. They have qualified electricians and plumbers employed with the town capable of doing the construction.

Karen Jones would eventually like to see a "Reflection Garden" located within the cemetery. If these bathrooms become a reality we may want to consider merging the two projects into one.

When the latest real estate purchase was finalized it left a new entrance to the cemetery located on North Street. The property is located in an R 4 zoning district, and requires 6,250 s ft. for a building lot. Troy feels if members voted to sell the lot to raise funds it would not create an issue for the cemetery, in the future, because 6 entrances are already in existence.

The 10 acres purchased with Real Estate account money, does not give ownership to the Commission, legally the land belongs to the Town of Elkton. The Code requires a public hearing be held for any real estate transactions. This issue should be discussed with the full membership in attendance.

Chuck Morris, seconded by Betty McGahey, made a motion to adjourn.

Voice Vote 4-0
Cathy Morrison, Karen Jones, Chuck Morris, Betty McGahey

Motion Carried

The next meeting is scheduled for April 19, 2018 @ 6 pm in the Council Chambers of the Elkton Area Community Center located at 20593 Blue & Gold Dr. Elkton, VA.

Chairperson: Lester Seal

Vice Chair: Cathy Morrison