

Essex Town Cemetery Commission Meeting

April 24, 2024 12:00 pm

Essex Town Clerks Office

Agenda

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- Call to Order and Approval of Agenda
- Public Comment
- Approval of January 31,2024 Minutes
- Member Death
- Sexton Report
 - Grave stone repair.
- Cemetery Beautification and Maintenance Review
 - Military Grave Markers and Flags
 - Spring Grounds Applications
- New Business
- Next Meeting Date
- Adjourn

Essex Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes (draft)

October 18, 2023, 12 am at Town Offices

Present: CC Members: Joe Teegarden (chair), Sue Brown, Elaine Strunk, Elizabeth King

(scribe)

Town Admin.: Jenn Booker, CC admin. Liaison, Ever Moore, Sexton

Minutes:

1. The meeting was called to order by Joe Teegarden at 12:03 am
 2. No members of the public were present.
 3. 8/30/23 minutes distributed, reviewed and unanimously approved.
 4. Ever presented their Sexton's Report (see attached). Ever will working on gravestone repair estimates.
 5. Budget update: (Jenn) no expenses since last meeting.
 6. Cemetery Beautification and maintenance review: a. The town has acknowledged ownership of the shed and will be reviewing the condition and providing the committee with estimates for approval. The maintenance of the shed will be paid via committee budget. Branches have been trimmed away from building b. Military grave markers: Joe updated the committee on fundraising efforts at Explore Essex event. Joe did an inventory of veterans in both cemeteries and there are 90 graves with flags and military markers; 25 with flags no marker but grave indicates military service; 25 graves no flag or marker but grave indicates military service; 78 graves with flags no marker or indication of military service on grave. Elizabeth and Joe to research the 78 with no veteran inscription. Joe will contact VFW about potential sponsorship/donations. Elizabeth to explore adding signage at the cemetery regarding donations. c. Joe will follow up with landscapers regarding fall treatment. Ever will remove overgrown shrubs.
 8. Expanding CC revenue sources for ongoing grounds upkeep: Elizabeth donations can be accepted via cash or check. Will provide an update regarding potential signage to be installed at cemetery soliciting donations.
 9. Jenn brought a request for the installation of a bench to the committee for review. The committee declined the request.
 10. Joe will present to the select board at their request.
- NEXT MEETING: November 29th, 12 pm at Town Offices.

Sexton's Report
November 29th, 2023
Prepared by Ever Moore

This report has been written to give the Cemetery Commission one final update for the Mountain View Cemetery for this year. This report will cover the sexton's work done for the cemetery from October 17th, 2023 to November 29th, 2023.

As of the dates, I have performed the following duties on behalf of Mountain View Cemetery:

- Located lots for Hammond family and performed a walk thru with a family representative
- Re-marked for monument installation on Arthur Cheney's lot with daughter's approval
- Fixed cornerstones for Carolyn Moore
- Cut shrubs obscuring gravestones
- Price quoted three separate stone cutting companies for beautification project in both MVC and Common burial

There was a burial held the second weekend of November, though I was unable to personally mark it due to travel.

Gravestone Repair Costs:

I will be writing a separate report to breakdown costs from the three stone cutting companies that chose to partake in this bid. I do not have prices from everyone due to issues with email and miscommunication. I am hoping to have the breakdown completed by this afternoon, but I'm also trying to give the remaining stone cutters enough time to review everything that we've previously spoken about. This separate report will also be sent via email.

Observations from the cemetery:

Having spent several days out in late November, I have a few observations that I'd like to share with the Commission. Firstly, I am also concerned about the flags placed for our veterans. After walking Mountain View after the lawn was mowed, I retrieved about 3-4 torn and tattered flags that had been knocked down from the mowing. I believe that the flag holders will help, but I'm also concerned that the flag holders will be hit, as well. (I have saved the destroyed flags and will be turning them in for proper disposal.)

I have also noticed a lot more dog walkers in the cemetery than I had in previous months. Unfortunately I happened to notice a lot more dog feces on graves, as well. Worse yet, I've spoken with family members visiting their loved ones' graves who have complained about the dog feces. My suggestion would not be to punish the entire town's dogs from entering the cemetery, but instead to suggest that Mountain View may benefit greatly from having free doggie bags available at the sign where cemetery rules are located.

The shrubs planted around monuments and graves have been trimmed, though nothing was taken down completely. If that is something that we would like to do, I will need more equipment and manpower to have that task completed. Any shrub that obscured the gravestone it was beside has been reshaped to allow the full monument to be seen again.

Lastly, after speaking with Sara O'sullivan for the Hammond lots, she mentioned several times how uncomfortably warm the cemetery gets in spring and summer, and how she wished there were more trees for shade, especially for our elderly visitors. She has asked me to speak with the Commission about donating one of the graves from her plot on Central South Avenue to have a tree planted here. She was also very interested in the beautification project and said that she'd be happy to help with seeding the grass next season. She even went as far to say that if something was posted to Front Porch Forum, she thought that there would be a good turn out.

After looking over the monuments with Bianchi, I will say that I think posting on Front Porch Forum may help in more ways than one. In both cemeteries, the stones are starting to green or yellow, with many in MVC now black from the grime. If we could work with the Vermont Old Cemetery Association to help organize a monument cleaning, I think that we'd have great success with making the monuments look their best again. We definitely have town interest, which is really exciting!

Conclusion:

As the wind turns cold and the trees fall bare, the cemetery has quieted down immensely - save for the familiar sounds of crows and ravens squawking. The last time that I was in the cemetery, it seemed to be doing as well as usual. More monuments are able to be viewed and read after taking time to reshape some shrubs. Parks and Rec have been out doing a great job with keeping the leaves clear. The cemetery visitors have started to prepare their loved one's plots for winter with care and attention. I have found myself looking around the communal burial ground and seen so much life and love, even in the cold. I've never had a job like this, which I feel was so obvious as I've stumbled through learning the ropes, and I've deeply enjoyed it.

Thank you for a great season, everyone! Have a great winter!