

NANTUCKET CEMETERY COMMISSION
Posted Meeting of December 11, 2024, at 3:00 pm
DPW Conference Room, 188 Madaket Road, with Zoom Connectivity

DRAFT MINUTES FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Attendance, by Roll Call: Commissioners: Frances Karttunen (by Zoom), Allen Reinhard, and Barbara White; Charlie Polachi, DPW, Cemetery Administrator. There was a quorum at all times.

Absent: Scott McIver and Lee Saperstein

1. Call to Order.

Allen Reinhard called the meeting to order at 3:01 pm and recording of the meeting started: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FC6aVUnvCnA&list=PL49sKqpy7VAhlyX1ozdd1bZ3zV8kXFp8M&index=54>.

2. Public and Commissioners Comments.

With no members of the public present, there were no public comments; equally, there were no Commissioners' comments.

3. Minutes of November 13, 2024.

Allen Reinhard asked for approval of the minutes of November 13, 2024, and Barbara White so moved with Frances Karttunen seconding the motion, which was approved unanimously by roll-call vote (Frances Karttunen, aye; Allen Reinhard, aye; and Barbara White, aye).

4. Approval of Lot Sales since Last Meeting.

With respect to lot sales, Allen Reinhard said that he had sold three lots at Polpis in two sales. The first was lot G8 to Kerry Flynn; this was approved unanimously on a motion by Barbara White (voted aye), seconded by Frances Karttunen (voted aye), to which Allen Reinhard voted aye. The second sale was of lots F6 and F7 to Ivy and Francis Scricco, which was approved by the same sequence of motions.

5. Public Information Plan.

[From the Agenda]: "A plan to inform the community about the work of the Cemetery Commission to improve the condition of the monuments and grounds in each of the nine Town Cemeteries once work is completed this spring at Newtown and New North. How best to inform the Town of the work we will have completed."

Allen Reinhard reflected on the amount of positive things done by the Commission and suggested that it was time to inform the public on achievements. This could include articles in

the newspaper and the on-line news sources such as “The Nantucket Current.” Work on restoration of monuments in New North and Newtown is underway and should be finished by the summer season, which would be a good time to release the articles. It’s not just the work on the monuments that could be featured but also improvements to Polpis Cemetery, GPR surveys of Newtown and replacing that cemetery’s flagpole, and the significant improvement in record keeping; as well as signage, fencing, paths, and so forth. He called for ideas on how best to do this with the guidance that there could be a return to this topic in future meetings.

Barbara White suggested that the Commission comes together in a brain-storming session to generate thoughts and subjects and to include potential pictures. She felt that if the publications mentioned above were to write articles, then the social media would pick up on them. Frances Karttunen added that the glossy magazines: “Nantucket Today” and “The N Magazine” would be good places for well-illustrated articles. Potential contacts at these publications was discussed. Barbara White and Frances Karttunen agreed to meet informally to map out a program of articles. Timing was discussed and Allen Reinhard said that, with restoration work well underway, summer would be a good target.

Before leaving this item, Allen Reinhard reflected on succession planning for the Commission, including how we might recruit potential new members. Frances Karttunen and Barbara White noted that there has been interest from Michael Harrison and Amelia Holmes of the Nantucket Historical Association and Jascin Leonardo Finger of the Maria Mitchell Association. It was agreed that all three have shown interest in Nantucket Cemeteries, including their history, and would make excellent additions to the Commission. Charlie Polachi said that he would add them to the distribution list so that they could preview agendas.

In a segue, Allen Reinhard noted that the Commission’s Mission Statement included a goal for accurate record keeping and that, with an excellent relationship with the Department of Public Works, this has been achieved. He felt that the Mission Statement is timely but that Commissioners may wish to review it to see if it needs to be rewritten to reflect all of the things that it does.

6. Monument Restoration Project Update.

Allen Reinhard spoke with pleasure on the progress being made in restoring monuments in Nantucket’s cemeteries. Charlie Polachi added that the requests for bids had been approved by the Finance Department and the one for Newtown went out today (December 11). Once bids are submitted and a contract awarded, we will know budget status and whether the balance is sufficient to request bids for New North Cemetery.

Before leaving this topic, Allen Reinhard commented upon the maintenance of the cemeteries and that they have never looked better. Compliments are due to the contractor.

7. Newtown Cemetery Legal Status Update.

While there has been no news about the Commission’s request for the legal designation of Newtown as a Cemetery. Allen Reinhard mentioned that he had an opportunity recently to talk

with Tracy Reed, the Town's Real Estate Specialist, and she said that she was working on it. He recalled that she had told Lee Saperstein earlier that the Nantucket Education Trust wants to build more houses against Newtown Cemetery and that will require establishing a legal boundary for the cemetery.

8. Update on Video of Historic Coloured Cemetery and Public Showing.

Allen Reinhard called on Barbara White for the update of the video on the Historic Coloured Cemetery (HCC). She recounted, as projected at the previous meeting of the commission, that videos were recorded in the studio over a full weekend and then on the following Monday another four hours were recorded in a private home. The videographers are reviewing clips of music played by Mollie Glazer and her son. They also reviewed audio quality on the interview clips and decided that one of them needed to be re-recorded.

She said that the interviews were "heartwarming." She met people for the first time who told her interesting histories of the HCC, many of which she had not heard before. She and Frances Karttunen talked about how and when to release the finished video. In all likelihood, it will be presented first at the Nantucket Historical Association but, then, she is hopeful that there could be a major presentation at the Dreamland Theater.

There is a concern now that the video, with a length of only 30 minutes, may not be suitable for a theatrical presentation. Frances Karttunen said that if the presentation included introductions of the people involved, particularly the video subjects, and a time for questions and answers, then there would be no problem in filling a two-hour time period.

Frances Karttunen brought up a problem that she sees. There are no funds in the grant to pay the musicians. While she and Barbara White are happy to volunteer without pay, it seems harsh to ask the musicians to work without pay. She asked, if a donor can be found, how could they be paid. Charlie Polachi told her that any donation designated for the musicians and given to the Cemetery Commission must actually be given to the Select Board for their acceptance on behalf of the Town and use by Cemetery Commission.

9. Old, New, Other Business.

Frances Karttunen reported that she had been told by Diane Egan, who lives across the street from the Quaker Cemetery, that most visitors to the cemetery enter from Milk Street (sic; Vestal Street) and there needs to be a sign at that location. If commissioners agree, the DPW should be asked, with a work order, to install such a sign. With the absence of markers, many visitors are unaware that this is a cemetery. Visitors may enter also from the Madaket Road. The Quaker practice on not marking graves hides the fact that there are thousands of burials in this ground. Barbara White agreed and Charlie Polachi suggested that a small sign should be installed at the other three corners of the cemetery.

Subsequent to the meeting, Frances Karttunen offered a suggested text for these signs.

"Historic Cemetery"

“Several thousand members of Nantucket’s Quaker Meeting were laid to rest here in unmarked graves according to Quaker tradition.”

The conversation went on to identifying the total number of burials in Quaker Cemetery. The estimate of several thousand is used but it is inexact. The Quaker records are kept in the NHA Research Library and they could be consulted for a total record of deaths. Charlie Polachi related the success of the WPI Student Project on identifying Town trees as a lead into using them next year for a Quaker Cemetery project. He also said that Town trees are identified with an individual tag, which has a QR code on it in addition to written information about the tree, and the current project is to locate each tag on a GIS map and to link the individual QR codes to the map and data base. He mentioned this tree project because it shows how graves could be marked with a QR code and linked back to a data base such as exists in the NHA Research Library. Prompted by Barbara White, he said that a link between a QR code on the entry signs and the Town’s data base could be done now.

10. Adjournment.

By acclamation, adjournment was at 3:42 pm.

Next regular meeting: Wednesday, January 8, 2024, at 3:00 pm, in the DPW conference room at 188 Madaket Road (NB: correction from the Agenda/). For those who wish to attend virtually, a Zoom link is attached:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85669907430?pwd=UCtldFIPSE9VTitrU05CVTJyOWkydz09.>

Respectfully submitted: _____; Date: 12/2024
Lee W. Saperstein, Secretary

Cemetery Projects List (as printed on the agenda):

1. Legal status of Newtown Cemetery with recorded survey. Awaiting action.
2. Monument Restoration at Newtown and New North Cemeteries this fall.
3. Fencing and brush removal at New and Old North Cemeteries.
4. Fencing and brush removal at Historic Coloured Cemetery and other Town cemeteries; Develop a list of work.