

NANTUCKET CEMETERY COMMISSION
Posted Meeting of February 12, 2025, at 3:00 pm
DPW Conference Room, 188 Madaket Road, with Zoom Connectivity

FINAL AND APPROVED MINUTES

Attendance, by Roll Call: Commissioners: Frances Karttunen, Scott McIver, Allen Reinhard, Lee Saperstein (joined by Zoom at 3:24 pm), and Barbara White; Charlie Polachi, DPW, Cemetery Administrator. There was a quorum at all times.

Guest: Tracy MacDonald, Real Estate Specialist (by Zoom).

Absent: Lee Saperstein was delayed in joining.

1. Call to Order.

Allen Reinhard called the meeting to order at 3:02 pm and recording of the meeting started: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1cNvTr9edzM&list=PL49sKqpy7VAhIyX1ozdd1bZ3zV8kXfP8M&index=56>.

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 January 8, 2025.

Allen Reinhard asked for approval of the minutes of January 8, 2025, and Barbara White so moved with Frances Karttunen seconding the motion, which was approved unanimously by roll-call vote (Frances Karttunen, aye; Scott McIver, aye; Allen Reinhard, aye; and Barbara White, aye).

4. Newtown Cemetery Legal Status Update.

It was decided quickly that this agenda item should be moved ahead of that on Lot Sales so that Tracy MacDonald, who was calling in by Zoom, could get on with her busy schedule. Allen Reinhard then introduced her and said that she would be talking about progress on Newtown Cemetery. She began by saying that the Commission will be pleased by the progress that is underway in establishing the Cemetery's legal status. She noted that the Cemetery's ownership has never been recorded or registered and that the steps that are underway are to ensure that the Town owns Newtown without doubt. She recognized Lee Saperstein's efforts on deed searches on lands surrounding the Cemetery and on detailing the history of land conveyances around the Cemetery's boundaries.

She went on to say that she sought to prepare a Warrant Article for the Annual Town Meeting that would authorize the taking of the existing Newtown Cemetery, 46 Sparks Avenue. She then

said that Town Counsel suggested a title review by a Land Court examiner to reassure voters that there would be no liability for damages when this land is taken. Such a review would not be ready by May so the Warrant Article has been deferred to a Special Town Meeting in the fall. She then added that this taking would be only for Number 46 because there is some uncertainty about clear title to Numbers 40, 42, and 44 Sparks. Once 46 is defined clearly as belonging to the Town and so recorded, work may begin on takings for the three adjacent lots. This cautious approach reflects a concern that there are unknown landowners of these lots who might claim damages for a taking. Before leaving the meeting, she recapitulated the steps that will soon unfold, noting that this would be real progress.

After she left the meeting, Commissioners discussed the steps that could be taken to improve Newtown. When 46 Sparks is officially recorded as Town-owned land, funds could be directed toward maintenance and a determination of the availability of burial plots. Unfortunately, the Commission's concern for clearing the brush at the southern end of Number 40 and performing a ground-penetrating radar survey for locating burial plots would need to be deferred until the subsequent taking could be made.

5. Approval of Lot Sales since Last Meeting.

There have been no new lot sales since the last meeting, which reduces the pressure on the Commission to lay out additional lots at Polpis Cemetery. As a matter of interest, Allen Reinhard reported a telephone conversation about a possible recent lot sale with a person who, knew that a sale had been made by a recently deceased colleague, but did not know in which cemetery. Town records did not show a sale to the colleague in Polpis, the only cemetery with available lots, so he suggested that Jeff Morash, of Prospect Hill Cemetery, be contacted.

6. Discussion: Publicizing Projects and Work of the Cemetery Commission to the Island Community.

Allen Reinhard noted that reporting the Commission's successes in maintaining the cemeteries was a matter of continuing interest. The recent article about the Historic Coloured Cemetery video was most positive. He felt that an article about monument restoration might be next. Barbara White agreed but said that it would be best scheduled when all cemeteries had been treated. Frances Karttunen reported her conversation with the Editor-in-Chief of the Inquirer and Mirror, Josh Balling, who told her that this summer might be too soon for another cemetery article in Nantucket Today, their monthly magazine. Allen Reinhard closed this item by saying that public awareness of the work of the Commission was important and that any opportunity for publicity would be followed, which is why this topic is returned regularly to the Agenda.

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

Allen Reinhard turned to Frances Karttunen for news on the Historic Coloured Cemetery video. She reported that a rough cut of the entire video is ready and is being closely edited for a final version. Insertion of credits into the video is part of this final work. The premiere of Nantucket's Historic Colored Cemetery: "Stories Told by Nantucketers" will take place at 4 pm On May 4, 2025, on the big screen of the Dreamland Theatre. A Q&A session will follow with

narrators, the videographer, the film editor, and Barbara White and Frances Karttunen. A trailer is being prepared to be shown before feature movies at the Dreamland during the month of April. Nantucket Community Television plans to film this event and then run it as a one-hour feature on NCTV.

8. Monument Restoration Project Update: Newtown and New North Cemeteries.

When asked about the status of bids for restoration work at Newtown Cemetery, Charlie Polachi replied that there were two very similar bids for the work. To choose one, the Town has to ask a series of questions of each bidder and then choose the one deemed most qualified. One of the bidders is LMC, the company that has done work previously on Nantucket; the other is new. He will be sending out the questions soon and will report back on the choice of bidder.

9. Old, New, Other Business.

Frances Karttunen reported that she reviews reports from various websites, often found on the Black Cemetery Network or Atlantic Black Box. A recent one, <https://atlanticblackbox.com/2025/01/31/dyckman-farmhouse-museum-event-the-harlem-african-burial-ground-history-beneath-our-feet-on-2-12/>, discussed the discovery of a Black burial ground that had been buried beneath a bus depot in Harlem (126th Street and Second Avenue, by the Harlem River). The depot was obsolete and the remains of over 140 departed people were uncovered during the demolition process. The site is now to have the burial ground identified and a memorial erected in it (<https://edc.nyc/project/east-126th-harlem-african-burial-ground-project>). Because the burial ground was established by the Dutch Reformed Church, today's Elmendorf Reformed Church is involved in establishing the memorial.

10. Adjournment.

By acclamation, adjournment was at 3:32 pm.

Next regular meeting: Wednesday, March 12, 2025, 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: 02/14/2025
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 Historic Coloured Cemetery and other Town cemeteries.
4. Corner markers and new map for Polpis Cemetery.

