NANTUCKET CEMETERY COMMISSION
Posted Meeting of March 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, and Barbara White; Charlie Polachi, DPW, Cemetery Administrator. There was a quorum at all times.

Guest: Jascin Finger, Maria Mitchell Association.

1. Call to Order.

Allen Reinhard called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm and recording of the meeting started: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dJMrGqkqPU&list=PL49sKqpy7VAhIyX1ozdd1bZ3zV8kXFp8M&index=57.

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 February 12, 2025.

Allen Reinhard asked for approval of the minutes of February 12, 2025, and Barbara White so moved with Scott McIver seconding the motion, which was approved unanimously by roll-call vote (Frances Karttunen, aye; Scott McIver, aye; Allen Reinhard, aye; Lee Saperstein, aye; and Barbara White, aye).

4. Approval of Lot Sales since Last Meeting.

There have been no new lot sales since the last meeting. As a matter of interest, Allen Reinhard reported several telephone inquiries that have not led to an inspection or an application for a lot.

5. Newtown Cemetery Legal Status Update.

Allen Reinhard reported that there had been no change in status of Newtown. He was, however, optimistic about progress toward a legal definition of Newtown as a Cemetery because Tracy MacDonald, lead Real Estate Specialist, had been joined by Robert Bystrowski, Real Estate Specialist II. The two of them should be able to reach closure on a number of real estate issues, including Newtown.

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

Frances Karttunen and Barbara White reported that the Historic Coloured Cemetery video is finished and that is there is a final cut ready for projection. As reported before, the premier is to be May 4th in the Dreamland Theatre with NCTV recording the presentation and the subsequent question-and-answer discussion. Their video will be posted on YouTube. It is hoped that the NCTV video will be one hour long. The video has been submitted to the Nantucket Film Festival for inclusion in its documentary section. There is, though, a question on eligibility because of its earlier presentation.

Charlie Polachi asked that the Commission approve formally the status of the final cut so that he could recommend payment of the videographers' invoice. Barbara White so moved, Frances Karttunen seconded, and the Commission voted unanimously in favor (Frances Karttunen, aye; Scott McIver, aye; Allen Reinhard, aye; Lee Saperstein, aye; and Barbara White, aye). Barbara White noted that the video's credits include one to Bob Gardner, former Secretary of the Cemetery Commission; she asked for his address so that she could tell him of the credit. After the premier presentation, she would like that a link to the video go onto the Commission's web page; she will also forward a link to the Black Cemetery Network in the hopes that they will display it.

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

Charlie Polachi reported that the contract for restoration work in Newtown Cemetery is up for approval at this evening's Select Board meeting. It is intended to go to LMC Contracting and is for $52,547.13. In that this bid amount is less than the amount projected by the Town, there will be sufficient funds to start the bidding process for New North Cemetery.

8. Planning for the Future of the Cemetery Commission. Discussion.

Allen Reinhard reminded the commissioners that succession planning has been on our agenda for some time. He is very pleased about what this Commission has accomplished and recognizes, however, that fresh membership may be needed for future activities. He noted that other committees have asked the Select Board to expand their numbers so as to provide space for interested parties. Lee Saperstein then said that the Commission was founded differently through an act of the General Court of Massachusetts (the legislature) and would require an amendment to that act to expand the membership of the Commission. Attached to these minutes is a copy of Chapter 47 of the Acts of 2011 that established the Commission. It is noted that Section 27 of Chapter 114 of the Massachusetts General Laws states that a commission needs only three members. The later act expands Nantucket's Commission to five members. While it could be managed, the process of expanding the Commission would be cumbersome.

Barbara White, reflecting that expansion may still be a good idea, said that she intends to retire at the end of her term, which would be in June 2025. Scott McIver added that he, too, would retire in June of 2026, although he would remain interested in the work of the Commission. Allen Reinhard recognizing that these retirements provide an opportunity for new members. He then added that Jascin Finger was attending this meeting as a guest and as a potential new member. In addition, Michael Harrison and Amelia Holmes of the Nantucket Historical Association, NHA, have expressed interest in membership. Allen Reinhard said that he would invite them,

also, to attend future meetings. He noted that essential work needed at Newtown would be in good hands. Not only does the Commission need to pursue the legal issues at the cemetery, it, then, needs to deal with vegetation clearing and surveying of the southern corner, and, then, designing an improved layout of the cemetery.

Scott McIver opened a new question by asking about actions that might be needed when all burial grounds are full. Several commissioners noted that historic cemeteries in London and New Haven have moved existing monuments to the edge of the cemetery and then re-used the space for newer burials. Avoiding such a drastic action might require the Town to open new burial grounds in undeveloped Town lands. Barbara White suggested that lot owners believe that they have an eternal property right to their lots while what they actually have is a right to a burial. Although the issue may be years away, its consideration should remain a planning concern for the Commission.

Jascin Finger spoke up to say that she has a strong interest in monument preservation and, indeed, conducted workshops in the proper, non-destructive methods of cleaning monuments. They have been held at the Prospect Hill Cemetery. She definitely wants to work with the Nantucket Cemetery Commission.

Charlie Polachi added another concern for future planning. A large section of Old North Cemetery has no monuments in it. He believes that there is a case for doing a GPR survey of those lots to verify that they contain graves. Lee Saperstein suggested that very early monuments might have been made of wood and have since decayed. Charlie Polachi suggested that stone monuments sometimes slip beneath the turf and can be found by GPR.

9. Old, New, Other Business.

Frances Karttunen, reflecting on the success of the Women's monument in the Founders' Burial Ground, noted that there is no monument for Absalom Boston and his wife, Hannah, in the Historic Coloured Cemetery. The Boston Family plot is identified but there is neither monument nor location for Absalom and Hannah Boston's graves. She asked if it would be possible to raise money for such a monument. Charlie Polachi suggested that restoration funds could be used for this purpose. In terms of style, Barbara White suggested that we look at the Boston area in the cemetery for compatibility. Lee Saperstein suggested that a formal motion to investigate costs and style and, eventually, production of a monument would be in order. Frances Karttunen made that into a motion to authorize Charlie Polachi to research costs with input from Scott McIver on styles. Barbara White seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (Frances Karttunen, aye; Scott McIver, aye; Allen Reinhard, aye; Lee Saperstein, aye; and Barbara White, aye).

10. Adjournment.

Adjournment was moved by Barbara White, seconded by Frances Karttunen, and approved unanimously (Frances Karttunen, aye; Scott McIver, aye; Allen Reinhard, aye; Lee Saperstein, aye; and Barbara White, aye). It came at 3:48 pm.

Next regular meeting: Wednesday, April 9, 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=UCtIdFlPSE9VTitrU05CVTJyOWkydz09.

Respectfully submitted: _____; Date: 03/19/2025
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.

Appendix 1: Chapter 47 of the Acts of 2011 (Massachusetts).

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A SEPARATE CEMETERY COMMISSION FOR THE TOWN OF NANTUCKET.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same as follows:

SECTION 1. (a) There shall be a board of cemetery commissioners of the town of Nantucket consisting of 5 persons appointed by the board of selectmen. Two commissioners shall be appointed for 3 years, 1 commissioner shall be appointed for 2 years and 2 commissioners shall be appointed for 1 year. Thereafter, the terms shall be appointed for 3 years.
(b) The cemetery commission shall meet from time to time but no less than annually, and organize by the choice of its members a chairman, a vice chairman and a secretary. It shall be the duty of the secretary to keep a record of the doings, receipts and expenditures of the cemetery commission and render a specific report to be filed with the town clerk and the board of selectmen on or about July 15, to be printed in the annual town report.
(c) The cemetery commissioners, with the approval of the board of selectmen, may make changes to cemetery rules and regulations not contrary to law with regard to the use of the town cemeteries, and the rules and regulations shall be on file with the town clerk.

SECTION 2. (a) The cemetery commission shall have charge of the public cemeteries of the town, to lay out the same into lots, to execute and deliver deeds therefor, and to erect necessary signs, fences, buildings and other structures in or about the same, at an expense not to exceed, in any case, the amount of the funds at its disposal.
(b) The cemetery commission shall direct the expenditures of all general cemetery funds in the cemetery account and of all specific appropriations, unless otherwise ordered by the town, and the income of all trust funds held by the town for cemetery purposes, conforming to the directions of the depositor.
(c) The cemetery commission shall keep a complete record of all sales of lots in the public cemeteries of the town and the deeds thereof, together with the names of the deceased and the location of the graves. True copies of all such deeds, names, and grave locations shall be on file with the town clerk.

SECTION 3. This act, being necessary for the welfare of the town and county of Nantucket and its inhabitants, shall be liberally construed to effect its purposes.

SECTION 4. This act shall take effect upon its passage.

Approved, June 15, 2011.