

**Town of Wiscasset
Cemetery Committee**

MINUTES

October 3, 2022

1. Present: Peter Wells, Becky Applin, Mark Light, Steve Christiansen, Suzanne Rankin.

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 by Becky Applin.

2. Steve Christiansen proposed several changes to the draft minutes of the June 6, 2022 meeting. A motion to accept the June 6, 2022 Minutes as amended was made by Peter Wells and seconded by Becky Applin, which was approved (5-0).

3. Old Business:

3a) Ancient Cemetery Fence update. Peter said that the fence bid had been accepted, and the majority of materials had been delivered to the contractor. The contractor was now waiting for DIG-SAFE to mark utilities in the area, and construction on the fence should begin this week or next.

3b) Ancient Cemetery Entrance update. Peter said that bids for the Entrance were read in public by the Select Board, and the bid from Great Works Landscape Inc was accepted for \$58,708, a copy of which Peter provided to the committee. Work is expected to begin in May 2023, although the estimate from Great Works had a typographical error, listing the start date as May 2022. Steve questioned the makeup of the "Plants as specified" line item of the estimate, and Peter confirmed that all plants would be low-lying ground cover and would not need to be mowed, pruned or maintained. The estimate says that design and permitting fees are not included and will be billed separately, but Peter and his company has done the design pro-bono and will cover the permitting.

The accepted bid estimate was in excess of the \$50,000 budgeted for the Entrance, and the difference was authorized by the Select Board to be funded from the Town Contingency fund. Steve said that, speaking as a Town citizen, he thought it was not proper use of the contingency fund to cover this excess, since this budget shortfall is not what the contingency fund is intended to cover.

Town Manager Dennis Simmons had expressed to Peter that it might be worthwhile to consider a fund raising effort to cover the excess so that the funds do not need to be taken from the contingency fund. Becky said that a fundraising effort may be difficult to execute. Mark asked how potential donors would be recognized, Peter said most town

citizens he knew that might be willing to contribute would likely not want any recognition. He said he recommended any fundraising effort to be limited to asking friends to consider a donation, without making a large public request. Becky said she could write a letter to the editor thanking the Town, citizens and Select Board for approving the entrance, and making a simple statement that donations would be accepted to cover the funding gap. Steve asked about the mechanics of bookkeeping the donations and whether they would go back into the contingency fund. Mark mentioned that we could get the donations before any money was actually spent out of the contingency fund. Before any fundraising effort is acted upon we will need to consult with the Town Manager on specifics. We agreed to continue consideration of fund raising but not to take action at this time.

3c) Cemetery Location Map. After months of searching, the old tax map annotated with locations of all burial sites in Wiscasset was found. Peter took that map, scanned it into a digital format, colorized it, added graphics and cleaned it up, and presented to the committee two versions of the updated map, along with a list of the 44 burial sites marked on the map. Peter has questions about the names of many of the burial sites, since many are named on the list as simply one of the named deceased persons interred at the site. Becky said Jane Tucker's project may have additional information. Jane visited every known burial site in Wiscasset in the 1970s and compiled a list of sites as well as names on markers and monuments in each. Her project is in the archives of the library. We agreed to consider Peter's map options and the list of burial sites, and we will come up with a final plan for the map at a later date.

3d) Perimeter survey. Peter provided the latest information on the survey of the Ancient Cemetery. The survey has been approved, funded and scheduled, and is expected to begin any day now (estimated date was late September). Once completed, owners of abutting property may refute the property lines drawn by the survey. If there are no challenges to the survey, pins will be installed for posterity.

4. New business:

4a) Budget. Becky said the budget process is in full swing, and that as the committee identifies budget items, at this point we would be most likely targeting the 2023-2024 budget. We should continue to identify and prioritize projects so that we can be ready to make budget submissions on a continuing basis in accordance with the Town planning calendar. It was also noted that any use of perpetual or cemetery maintenance funds would need to be submitted via the budget process.

4b) Projects and priorities.

1. Becky would like to hire someone to repair and refurbish the stones that are in the worst condition. Suzanne asked if the stones to be fixed would only be

- those with no known point of contact, Steve said the majority of the markers and monuments have no known point of contact for ownership. Becky said that a Maine Old Cemeteries Association (MOCA) restorer is available, for \$800/day (current price) plus board, to work on damaged stones. This restorer is often accompanied by a contingent of assistants, and a few days of work might make a great difference in our cemeteries. Our committee needs to identify and prioritize the stones we would like to have restored. We also need to investigate the specifics of budgeting and bidding for the service, whether it must be competed or whether it may be sole sourced.
2. Steve said the tomb in the center of the Evergreen Cemetery needs to have the mortar/concrete between the granite blocks repaired, and the concrete top refinished. He is concerned it may collapse, incurring much greater cost.
 3. Steve said dead trees need attention, but we are awaiting the perimeter survey to establish ownership and responsibility for the tree removal.
 4. The fence of the Evergreen Cemetery needs to be repaired. Steve believes the contractor that damaged the fence years ago should be responsible for repairing it, but he has not been successful in convincing several iterations of Town leadership to demand the contractor fix the fence. Steve does not think Town funds should be used to repair the fence damaged by the contractor.
 5. Additional things the Committee would like to explore include development of a database for Wiscasset burial grounds, QR codes that direct visitors to that and other databases of cemeteries possibly including MOCA and Find-a-Grave, and purchase of software for management of cemeteries and record keeping. Mark offered to try to import MOCA database info for Wiscasset burials into a sort-able and searchable spreadsheet as the beginning of our database.

4c) Steve asked if the approved rules and regulations and forms (Request to Place a Marker, Request to Bury) had been incorporated into the Town Office protocols. Becky said that they have not, and that we need to circle back to Town Office and Select Board to find out the status.

4d) Steve also mentioned that sometimes markers and monuments just appear at town cemeteries, frequently not in accordance with regulations (for example, not flush with the ground so mowers must navigate around them).

Steve motioned to adjourn at 6:55, Suzanne seconded the motion which was approved (5-0).

The next meeting will be Monday, November 7, at 6pm at the Town Office.

Mark Light

Secretary

