

Meeting Minutes of the Canterbury Cemetery Trustees - **FINAL**

April 14, 2021 – Canterbury Center Gazebo

Members present: John Goegel Jan Cote, and Sam Papps, Trustees; Kent Ruesswick, Sexton; Art Hudson, Selectman.

John Goegel called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. and welcomed Jan Cote to the Board of Trustees. He also thanked Selectman Hudson for joining us.

Jan Cote made a motion to elect John Goegel as chairman, seconded by Sam Papps. Unanimously voted in the affirmative. Chairman Goegel then moved to elect Sam Papps as Secretary and Treasurer, seconded by Jan Cote. Unanimously voted in the affirmative.

Chairman Goegel also made a statement of thanks to Hugh Fifield for his many years of service as a Cemetery Trustee, and to the Town as the Sexton.

Jan Cote moved to accept the minutes as written, seconded by John Goegel. Passed unanimously.

The board then moved on to discuss item 3 on the agenda, the Pallet gate. It has been known to the Trustees for at least the past five years that the Pallet Cemetery gate is in the possession of Cynthia Clark, who owns property in the Borough. The gate is currently displayed in her home as an art display. The trustees expressed their desire that the gate should be rehung at the cemetery, in its original intended place, and that we are willing to cover the expense of this undertaking of returning it to its original home. Kent noted that the posts had shifted over time that they no longer reflect their original width, where the gate once hung, and it might take stonewall work and some minor excavation to widen the posts again for the gate, probably by Kevin Fife. The question arose who could rehang it in a fashion that it could not be removed from its pins, and David Court the Blacksmith was noted as working on the Ham Gate. Art said he had thought the board had requested the gate to be rehung, and she had said yes? The trustees answered that had not happened. Kent echoed this no. John stated that Ms. Clark has not agreed with our request, and he feels that she is in violation of RSA 635:6 “Interference with Cemetery or Burial Ground” which lists that no person without permission shall remove “any fence, gate curb, or plot delineator...” without permission, which is further explained in RSA 635:7, “Unlawful Possession or Sale of Gravestones and Gravesite Items”. Someone asked does she have the right to do as she wants? and Jan answered that in reading the RSA, that this is an act of theft. It was noted that a cemetery is a sacred space, and that being in possession of an object such as this is not only against the law, it also just feels wrong. Why does she need it? Kent stated that Ms. Clark has made it into an art object, in her fear that the gate will be stolen from the property. Kent said that he made several trips to see Ginna Dudley, a former trustee, to retrieve records from her West Road home, and that on one of those trips the top half of the gate was given to him for the Cemetery Trustees safe keeping. It is now stored in the town Receiving Tomb, and Ms. Clark is demanding that the top be given to her. The story was shared of the Ham gate that was stolen from Shaker Road, and later returned, and this is what Ms. Clark cites as her fear for the Pallet gate, that it will be stolen from the cemetery. However, the Ham gate was secured to the pins by David Court and caps were welded to the top of the pins so that the gate could not be removed effectively without a great deal of force or serious tools. John Goegel noted that he could appreciate her concern for the gate, but at this point, this has gone too far. You can't see the cemetery, or the gate, from the road at all, and Ms. Clark and

Mr. McGraw have their property secured so to go and steal the gate would be a hard feat. Art questioned if they had the right? He finds it hard to justify how she is in the right to keep the gate from the cemetery where it was originally intended to serve as a gate. Kent noted several years ago, there was some tree work done at the Clark property where several trees were taken down and the Trustees split the cost with Willard and Cynthia. This worked out well. We do let people know we're coming on cemetery inspections. Art asked how many cemeteries Canterbury has, and John replied there are 35 in total.

Jan Cote made a motion that the Cemetery Trustees should contact the town's attorney to act upon this issue of the Pallet gate, and John Goegel seconded. Passed unanimously.

Art Hudson was thanked for joining us for this discussion, and he left.

**Sexton's Report:** Kent gave his report that there had been no burials at Maple Grove since Bucky Rollins, and there hadn't been any yet this spring. He has been contacted by the O'Neil family, who are working with Manchester Monument to move Corrine Foley's stone on the center of the Foley Lot in Section F, erect a new O'Neil family monument on the O'Neil lot, and to place a marker for Dianne O'Neil's mother who is interred in the O'Neil lot. The Trustees concurred with Kent on his idea, and he will resolve this with the family and company in the coming weeks. They would also like to sell back one Foley grave, but Sam wondered if the lot was owned by Bob Foley, not Dianne Foley O'Neil. He wanted to make sure they could legally sell back the one grave in the Foley lot, because he didn't think any of the parties involved were Bob Foley. He will check the deed stubs on record with the Cemetery Records. Kent went on to say his list of projects for the year include overseeing the repair of damage done to the cemetery lawn by the west gate at the Center, where the sod was torn up by a machine last fall in taking down the Guertin barn. He was promised by Ron Turcotte that it will be rectified after the crane comes to take the barn away, and Kent will make sure it will be made right. Kent and Mark Stevens need to go up to the Maple Grove this spring and begin laying out new graves for a new section. The budget is \$500 for supplies. John and Kent have met with Capital Well and received a quote in the \$16,000 range, for a well and plumbing. He noted there was an old well there once, but Hugh filled it in when Catherine Dickson asked him to install a pump. Jan asked if a dug well could be feasible, and Kent said yes but they are notorious for going dry. There was discussion of asking an abutter to run a hose up to the cemetery for patrons to use, but then there is liability if it is left on by mistake. There was also the idea of a cistern, and it was agreed that this would be an ongoing discussion. Kent also noted that in the past an outhouse and picnic table at the cemetery would be nice for families who come up to funerals from away. Kent has a call in with John O'Connor, the Road Agent, to see if they can't resolve the water issue of water washing over section F by Raymond Fife's lot. It was also noted that TJ Bibeau is leaving the DPW, and his hard work was commended by the Trustees. They have already raked up the pinecones. Charlie Beede has promised he will come and work on headstones this year for us. Dale Caswell, Gordon Jackson, Ruthie Mann, and others have offered help for the database program.

**Historian's Report:** Mark Stevens could not join the meeting but forwarded the following report. Mark has taken a group to the Nathaniel Pallet Cemetery and found it in good shape, same as when he was there last year. He met Cynthia Clark while at Pallet cemetery. A group also went to the Osgoodite Cemetery, where he noted a dying ash tree, infected with the Eastern Ash Borer, that should be cut in the next year or two. Several of the graves at Osgoodite could also use some fill to help with the settling that is occurring. He is currently working with two groups looking to place

a NH Historical Marker road sign for Sampson Battis in the Center. He is waiting to see if the project “has momentum and follow through” before moving forward.

**Veterans Affairs Report:** John reported that the Military Veterans Project, completed in 2017, has received its first update complete with improved mapping and 15 additional veterans listed. He noted “the 2021 update now contains the names of 174 veterans...interred in 15 of the town cemeteries.” The American Legion Post 31 of Penacook will be coming through to place flags prior to Memorial Day, and observance of Memorial Day has been tentatively planned in the Town Center per Mark Stevens. John O’Connor has said the Center and Maple Grove cemeteries will be ready for Mother’s Day this year. Kent Ruesswick and John Goegel coordinated, and more pipe was purchased and cut for the flags to be placed at the graves of the veteran’s headstones.

**Cemetery Keepers:** John also reported that there are currently 43 keepers for the town’s cemeteries, “who helped maintain the general appearance and good order of 33 town cemeteries.” The Spring E-Letter, sent out on behalf of the Trustees by John, was sent April 5<sup>th</sup> to the keepers, thanking them for their help and assistance.

**Update Website:** John asked if the town’s website could be updated with copies of our minutes and agendas and adding Jan Cote’s name. Sam will coordinate with Ken Folsom on this. Kent noted that all the electronic records should be kept at LastWalk as well, and he is keeping electronic copies of deeds as they are made up.

**Headstone Repairs:** Charlie Beede has promised we are on his list for the coming year, as we have a budget and projects for him to do. John noted he is comfortable with Kent doing the repairs, as we haven’t found anyone else to help us with these repairs. Kent said he’d still need to coordinate with Charlie because he wants to use Charlie’s sources for materials, epoxy, steel bands, etc. Hall Monument out of Northwood isn’t available. The Schneider’s have graciously agreed to cover the costs of repairs at the Moore Cemetery outside their property, and that is on Charlie’s list. Jan noted that when she and Mike went up to the Mason Cemetery, that Truey Hill’s stone has broken there. Dale Caswell had sent the Trustees a note stating that one marker at the Mathes Cemetery is also broken. Unfortunately, we can’t fix them all due to budget and finding nobody who can do it.

**Tree Removals:** There is an ash tree at the Ham Cemetery that needs to be removed this coming year. There were two large maples removed at the Center last year, that we paid Brian Magoon to come do for us. There is also the tree at the Osgoodites that Mark Stevens mentioned in his report.

**501c3:** The Trustees have recently been approached with gifts of money from residents, to be applied to the care and restoration of our cemeteries. However, we cannot accept the money, or it will be deposited into the Town’s General Fund to offset the budget – not enlarge it to give us more buying power. A “Friends of Canterbury Cemeteries”, organized as a non-profit group, would be able to accept donations from people and spend them on projects. Kent likes this idea, and we have money from the Schneiders and Frank Tupper. Jan was nominated by John and seconded by Sam to investigate this process and bring back to the Trustees recommendations as to how to proceed. Kent also noted the Trustees have perpetual care funds with interest that could be used for projects as well. Jan will call Ted LeClair and Mary Ellen MacCoy this week.

**Annual Cemetery Inspections:** We need to schedule for June and July, last year it took a few weeks to complete. We will discuss a firm schedule at our next meeting, and they will take place on three mornings over a period of a few weeks.

**Forfeiture Letters to Lot Owners:** Sam would like to send letters to lot owners at the Maple Grove who have not used their cemetery lots in over 50 years. The Trustees agreed, and Sam noted lots owned by Josiah and Ida Higgins, Margery Ruggles, and Louisa Jackman are all unused. He will send a draft letter for approval.

**Budget for 2022:** Something to begin thinking about. To be discussed at our next meeting.

Old Business:

**a. Space Needs at the Maple Grove.** The question arose how they would delineate the sections of the new section to be laid out? Kent and Mark will work on this and bring it back to the Trustees.

**b. Cemetery Database.** The Trustees were impressed with Cemify, who have a good product for a good price, to use for their database software. Sam made the motion to sign their contract for \$59/month and use them for the records of Canterbury's interments and it was seconded by John Goegel, to proceed with a contract with Cemify. Sam also noted that he will be working with Phil Ainsworth to wind down the FileMaker database project in the coming weeks, to back up the data and retain just the website LastWalk.Org for the Trustees' home page.

**d. Cemetery By-Laws Work Session.** The Trustees agreed to meet Wed. May 19<sup>th</sup> at 1 p.m. at the Meeting House for a work session on the by-laws and regulations. Sam will confirm that space for that date.

Meeting adjourned at 2:25 p.m., and the Trustees walked down to show Jan Cote the Center Cemetery, and the Morrill Receiving Tomb.

Next Trustees Meeting set for Wed. June 16, 2021 at 1 p.m. at the Gazebo.

Respectfully submitted,

Samuel Papps, Secretary  
for the Canterbury Cemetery Trustees.