



Edgartown Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes

DECEMBER 6, 2016

SPECIAL MEETING: PERSONNEL UPDATE

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Andy called to order the special meeting of the **Cemetery Commission** at **4:05pm** on **Tuesday, December 6, 2016**, at the **Edgartown Library, 2nd Floor Small Conference Room**.

II. ROLL CALL:

The following persons were present:

Cemetery Commission: Andy Kelly, Susan Brown, Liz Villard, Debbie Manley-Smith.

Selectmen: Michael Donaroma

Other: Jen Morgan, Juliet Mulinare

III. OPEN ISSUES:

1. Andy and Jen went to see Elaine after the last meeting, when Jen gave her verbal notice. After speaking with Elaine, Jen is requesting that the two week notice period be waived. Andy recommended this action.
2. Motion placed on the floor by Liz to accept Jen's request that her two week notice period be waived; Susan seconds, vote taken and passed. Andy will deliver Jen's letter to the Personnel Board for their vote next week.
3. Andy informed the Commission that Pam Dolby reached out again regarding the vote to turn the maintenance responsibilities of the Cemetery Department over to the Highway Department.
4. Andy said he spoke with Stuart Fuller regarding the removal of leaves from each of the Town's four cemeteries. Stuart has a lot going on right now and will not be able to clear any leaves for 6-8 weeks, so Andy reached out to TDR landscaping for a quote to do the work. The cost of the work would effectively eliminate the department's budget for the remainder of the fiscal year. The Commission discussed the possibility of being able to apply some of the money appropriated for Jen's salary to offset the cost of the work, since leaf removal was one of her responsibilities. Liz offered any help she could provide towards this effort and was thanked by the Commission for her willingness to do so.
5. Michael Donaroma joined the discussion to see how the Board of Selectmen could lend support to the Commission. He wants the Commission to be comfortable with a vote to turn the maintenance responsibilities over to Stuart and reiterated that the Selectmen think this is the best course of action. He wants the Commission and the Highway Department to find a balance of responsibilities through communication.

6. The Commission suggested that a single representative from the Highway Department, one who could attend the Commission's monthly meetings, would be the most efficient way to make the transition. That way, the members of the Commission could form a stable relationship with this person, and would be sure their concerns were heard. Mr. Donaroma agreed that this would be helpful in the proper maintenance of the cemeteries.
7. Mr. Donaroma reminded the Commission that the budgets for Annual Town Meeting must be finalized in the next few weeks, and in order to do that, the Commission must take this vote.
8. The Commission continued their discussion about having a single representative from the Highway Department. There are other maintenance tasks that must be completed in order to keep the cemeteries looking their best, and the winter months are when the planning for those tasks takes place. It is crucial that whoever takes on the maintenance of the cemeteries is familiar with the intricacies of the work and the historical integrity of each cemetery.
9. Mr. Donaroma asked the Commission when they would like to meet with Stuart; he offered them the option of taking a vote with written conditions in place, so that the budgeting process could move forward while the Commission works on how best to reorganize the responsibilities of the department.
10. Susan assured Mr. Donaroma that the Commission wants to work with Stuart to make this transition as smooth and easy on him as possible. She has two conditions, however: the Commission wants reassurance that they will be able to work with a single individual who will consistently attend meetings and become familiar with the Cemeteries; and that the funds that have been earmarked specifically for the Cemetery remain under the Commission's control. Mr. Donaroma reminded the Commission that only the maintenance responsibilities would be transferred to the Highway Department. Andy commented that a large percentage of what the Commission does would be considered "maintenance".
11. Debbie offered another concern: Who will grieving families call and speak with at their most painful hour? The administrative position that was recommended by the Selectmen is only ten hours per week and this is a job that requires the employee to be available at times other than regular working hours. Liz questioned who would be responsible for hiring this person. Debbie commented that Jen has done a wonderful job connecting with the Town's grieving families; the new hire for this position must possess a similar set of personality traits, specifically a genuine sensitivity when speaking with all bereaved families.
12. Jen joined the discussion, emphasizing how important this aspect of the job is and how much time she spent with families and individuals, walking through the cemeteries, finding the right location for them and their loved ones. She added that patience is also a major component of the job, as you don't want to rush someone during their saddest times.
13. Andy suggested a meeting the following week with both Stuart and Mr. Donaroma in attendance.
14. Liz requested that historical documentation be incorporated in the job description of the administrative assistant.
15. Jen asked Mr. Donaroma why he thought this arrangement was in the best interest of the Town. She questioned why, throughout this entire process, she has never heard directly from Pam or the Selectmen about how her job would be affected with these changes. Mr. Donaroma told Jen that he was not involved in the Department's affairs until he and the Board of Selectmen were presented with the Wasserman report. His

recommendations have been based on the results of that study. He said he did not know what transpired that made the study necessary to begin with.

16. Jen asked Mr. Donaroma how this arrangement works out better for the Town. She reminded everyone that her job was constantly on-call and the array of responsibilities she was performing would be very difficult to fill with highway guys and an administrator. Mr. Donaroma responded by saying the changes will allow the Highway Department to have a bigger crew, which is more economical for the Town. He added that the Board of Selectmen, and everyone involved, is relying on the Commission to work through this; he acknowledged the burden of responsibility being placed on the Commission.
17. Andy stated that the Commission has not yet had the chance to discuss the proposed changes at length, to weigh the pros and cons.
18. Jen continued by saying her job has essentially been ripped away from her with no explanation as to why. The new arrangement only benefits new hires for the Highway Department and puts a lot more responsibility in the hands of the volunteer Commissioners. She also said that she feels the Selectmen do not have a firm understanding of how invested she has been in this job for the past five years; no maintenance was ever behind or left undone.
19. Mr. Donaroma referenced the Wasserman Report again and said all decisions made have been based on that study. Debbie commented that the study only reviewed and interviewed the members of the Commission individually, never as a group; and that after the study was completed, the Commission continued to work effectively as a group to get things done.
20. The Commission discussed leaf removal in the cemeteries and decided it was too expensive and would have to wait.
21. Jen stated that the community will suffer from this decision without being informed about the entire situation; and that the maintenance of the Cemeteries will be the lowest priority for the Highway Department. Andy responded by saying that was the reason for the request of a designated liaison between the two departments, and that the chosen person should be in the Cemetery every single day during the summer season.
22. The Commission wants to continue to discuss the options before any decision is voted on.
23. Jen reminded the group that there is extensive administrative work involved with each burial, which are obviously unpredictable. Debbie reiterated how important it is to have someone with the right skills on the other end of the line when town residents call to arrange a burial for a loved one.

Liz motioned to adjourn the meeting, Debbie seconds the motion. No discussion, vote taken, passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 4:50pm.

Minutes submitted by: Juliet Mulinare