



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

ADMINISTRATION & ENGINEERING—WATER—SEWER-FACILITIES

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Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes

June 27, 2023

Melrose City Hall, Cassidy Room Conference Room, 562 Main Street, Melrose, MA 02176

Attendance:

Chairman Daniel O'Neill (DO)

Jim Troup, Deputy Director DPW (JT)

Commissioner Eileen Hamblin (EH)

Denise Slane, Cemetery Administrator (DS)

Commissioner Susan Cann (SC)

Invitees:

Patrick Dello Russo, City Auditor (PD)

Mayor Brodeur (MB)

Jane Pitts, GIS Analyst (JP)

Jen Gigoraitis, City Councilor (JM)

Mark Garipay, City Councilor (MG)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 8:32 a.m. A motion to call the meeting to order was made by DO and seconded by SC. All in favor.

Review of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of May 18, 2023 were reviewed. A motion to accept the minutes as read was made by SC and seconded by EH. All in favor.

Public Participation

A motion to open the meeting for public participation was made by SC and seconded by EH. All in favor. Floor opened at 8:33.

No residents were in attendance.

DO passed along a message from Gately Funeral Home that they support the Cemetery in keeping land/property that has been designated or that is owned by the Cemetery for future use and/or expansion of burials.

A motion to close the meeting for public participation was made by EH and seconded by SC. All in favor. Floor closed at 8:34.

Financial Report/Inventory

The financial report for May 2023 compiled by Angela Pisacreta and Denise Slane was reviewed. A motion to accept the report was made by EH and seconded by SC. All in favor.

Old Business

Livermore Mausoleum

DO updated the commission on the status of the repairs. Capuano Construction looked at the gate and said that the best option would be to replace the gate and have a screen placed across the bottom where the leaves are getting in. This should help with the upkeep of the mausoleum.

Paving

DO announced that he confirmed with DPW and D&R paving will be the contractor fixing sections of the roadways.

New Business

Discussion of Grave Sales 90% / Perpetual Care (P/C) 10%

PD explained the 90% / 10% split for grave purchases and the funds that the department/city are allowed to spend. He also inquired about why the commission is looking at changing this split, is it for future projects, expansion, etc... and that there may be other ways to fund rather than increasing the Perpetual Care (P/C) percentage. He understands that in order for the P/C account to grow we need to maintain the funds going into it. He also stated that the city has funds for cemetery projects and that perhaps any upcoming projects could be funding from this source and that the needs of the department don't all have to be funded from P/C. Patrick stated that he will help and work with the department and the commission to establish funding.

It was asked who determines the split. DO stated the commission does and that is was voted on by a past commission.

PD asked what it driving the commission to look at a change in the split.

EH stated that the commission is concerned for future funding, with the number of lots decreasing as sales continue, at some point there may not be any left to sell which would impact the funds being deposited into P/C. She stated that the commission is trying to preserve things for the future of the cemetery and that DPW will continue to have funds to take care of the cemetery for future generations.

SC stated that once we have reached the maximum numbers of graves that can be sold, the P/C funding will no longer be there and the commission wants to make sure that care of the grounds will continue.

PD stated that there can be alterations as needed to help keep P/C earning interest and that we can work together to ensure this.

MB stated that for one time needs there is an option to look at funding things with approval from free cash and that for longer term items the commission, cemetery department, audit and mayor's office can work together to establish a funding source.

EH stated that the commission is thinking about the future of the cemetery and its future funding without trying to place a lot of pressure on the city budget.

PD agrees with the commission strategizing for the future. MB stated he also agrees with this.

MG stated that the change to the 90% / 10% change was made by the commission back in the early 2000's. He too is concerned for future generations when lots sell out and no P/C funding will be coming in. He stated that he agrees with trying to build funding now so that we can continue to keep the grounds nice and so that it doesn't become a drain on future budgets.

DO stated that there are approximately 140 double depth graves and 180 single graves left.

SC discussed a few of the projects the cemetery and commission are currently discussing that will be big ticket items; ADA compliance items, new mapping of the cemetery grounds, installing a kiosk with map at the cemetery entrance (as discussed by DO at past meetings), wants to be sure funding will be available to complete these and other projects and is happy to learn that other sources are also available.

MG agrees that the grounds should be accessible to all residents and agrees with the ADA compliance items needing attention.

DO stated that the commission is not looking to create an impact on the city budget but that they are looking at a long term strategy. Something they are thinking about is a temporary split over 3 years, 1st year land 60% / p/c 40%, 2nd year land 70% / p/c 30%, 3rd year land 80% / p/c 20%.

PD said that they will need to understand and establish a time frame when a change is proposed.

EH stated that the commission is just trying to make sure we are prepared for the future.

DO stated that this item needs to be evaluated further and to table the discussion at this time. All agreed.

Discussion of Ripley School Land

DO stated that some of the land the Ripley School is on is cemetery property and that with the discussion of the new Police Station possibly being built there that there also needs to be a discussion about the property that is actually cemetery property as the cemetery property generates revenue for the city. While he supports the building of a new Police Station he cannot support the loss of cemetery property and potential revenue for the city. He requested that at this time JP explain the layout of the property.

JP explained that the property the Ripley School is on is 31,000 square feet and that there is ledge behind the school. The land was first purchased in 1928, then in 1940 the wings were added onto the building and then again in 1960 an additional expansion was made to accommodate an auditorium. She stated that a study would need to be done on the removal of ledge.

DO stated that he is not opposed to doing a land swap but that he does not support taking any land away from the cemetery. He also stated that he knows if this is an option that a land survey would be needed.

JP stated that a survey would be needed for accurate measurements.

MG stated that he supports the building of a new Police Station but does not support taking land away from the cemetery. He stated that he is not opposed to doing a land swap. MG also inquired about a piece of land along the roadway, is it owned by the cemetery or Pine Banks.

MB stated there is a land article that we can review to help with guidance on this.

JP stated that we can look into the land along the roadway and that testing would need to be done to see if the land in the area is viable for burials, some areas of the cemetery are not able to be used due to water tables and drainage issues.

EH asked how we can expand what we have.

JP said there are a few small narrow roadways that could be filled in and used for burials but this too would have to be surveyed and tested.

DO stated that no one from the Public Safety Commission has approached the Cemetery Commission about this.

MB stated that as we all know there are not a lot of options, if any within the City.

SC asked if a final decision has been made at this time.

MB stated it has not but it is being looked at as the preferred sight.

SC asked if the school committee would have to approve this sight for a swap since it is currently being used for a school.

MB said we should talk to the City Solicitor about this and that he believes the school committee may determine what happens to the Ripley School building.

MG stated the map currently show part of the Ripley School building and the parking lot on cemetery property. He asked if the new design for the land shows it being located on the cemetery property.

MB said that it has not been designed yet.

EH asked what would the tradeoff be and what we can do if there is a land swap.

DO stated that could not be determined until a land survey is done by the city.

SC asked if there was a time line required to request this be done and get the funding to complete a survey.

MB stated that a land swap needs to be voted on and would need to be submitted one month before the November election or then a special election would have to be held. A thirty day would notice would be needed for this.

EH stated that more discussions need to be had about this in the near future. DO agreed.

DO suggested tabling this item at this time and holding further discussions.

Items not reasonably anticipated by Chairman at time of posting.

Douglas MacDonald

DO announced that the family was very happy and touched to hear that the Cemetery will be naming a roadway after longtime commission member Douglas MacDonald. DPW will install the sign when it is ready.

EH made a motion to adjourn, SC second the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 10:26 a.m.

All in favor.