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ADMINISTRATION & ENGINEERING—WATER—SEWER—FACILITIES

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes

January 16, 2025 8:45 A.M.

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

Attendance:

Chairman, Daniel O'Neill (DO)

Cemetery Administrator, Denise Slane (DS)

Commission Member, Susan Cann (SC)

Co-Chair, Eileen Hamblin (EH)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 8:49 a.m. A motion to call the meeting to order was made by DO and was seconded by EH. All in favor.

Review of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of December 19, 2024, 2024, were reviewed. A motion to accept the minutes was made by SC and seconded by EH. Minutes accepted.

Public Comment

A motion to open the meeting for public comment was made by EH and seconded by SC. All in favor. Floor opened at 8:50.

No residents in attendance.

A motion to close the meeting for public comment was made by EH and seconded by SC. All in favor. Floor closed at 8:50.

Financial Report

The financial report for December 2024 as prepared by DS were reviewed. A motion to accept the reports was made by EH and seconded by SC. Reports accepted.

New Business

Discussion of Cemetery Funds

Per DO this item will be tabled until the next meeting. Kerriane Golden had a last-minute schedule change and was unable to attend the meeting. She has been moved to the February meeting.

Review and Discussion of Cemetery Rules and Regulations

DS gave an update on the Rules and Regulations. She has worked to combine the rules and regulations that were currently on file. Once the draft has been completed it will be presented to the commission for review and a vote to accept.

Discussion and Vote of Payment by Funeral Home or Bank Check Only

DS discussed with the commission the recent returned checks that were shown on the monthly financial reports reviewed by the commission. It was stated that in the past funeral fees had to be paid by a bank or funeral home check only. The commission discussed the increased number of personal checks that have been returned and discussed reinstating the bank or funeral home only check policy. EH stated she was worried about families having to get a bank check for cemetery fees. DS stated that currently the only fees that are affected by this change would be funeral fees other small fees a personal check would still be accepted. SC stated she agreed with accepting personal checks for smaller cemetery fees.

Motion: made by EH to only accept bank or funeral home checks for funeral service fees (land purchases and interment fees) and to begin this process as of March 1, 2025.

Motion Second: by SC

Further Discussion: None

Vote: 3 yes - 0 no- 0 absent - VOTE PASSED

DS will notify the area funeral homes of this new process and will notify Treasury Department of the change.

Discussion of plans for Columbarium

EH discussed that we need to begin plans for the installation of a columbarium. It was discussed that in the spring the commission meet with the grounds foreman to discuss possible locations for a columbarium to be installed. This way they can get proper measurements of the area(s) to help them begin a design to determine what the cost would be. It was also discussed that this plan be reviewed with Audit at the next meeting to discuss the funding of the project.

Old Business

Cemetery Digitalization Project

The monthly status report from Jane Pitts was reviewed.

Review and Discussion of Land/Perpetual Care Split

The commission reviewed the splits of other municipal cemeteries in the area and how much our split varies from them. It was stated that currently when graves are purchased 90% is deposited into the land sales account and 10% is deposited into the perpetual care account. It was discussed that

the land and perpetual care split was changed about ----- years ago although no records can be found of exactly when. The original split of incoming land purchases was 20% was deposited to land sales and 80% was deposited to perpetual care. It was discussed that the perpetual care fund interest account is the fund allowed to be spent to care for the cemetery and its grounds and that increasing the amount deposited into perpetual care would help to increase these funds for future improvements and expansions for the residents of Melrose. It was discussed that the commission adjust the percentages to align with other area municipal cemeteries and increase the amount being deposited into perpetual care to help increase interest funds that can be spent on improvements. DO discussed making this change effective at 50% to land sales and 50% to perpetual care but that they want to have enough time to discuss the change with Auditing. SC stated that making the change effective with the new fiscal year that begins July 1, 2025 might be good so that it would not effect the current fiscal years plan.

Motion: made by SC to adjust the land purchase split to be 50% deposited into the land sales account and 50% deposited into the perpetual care account beginning the new fiscal year of July 1, 2025.

Motion Second: by EH

Further Discussion: None

Vote: 3 yes - 0 no- 0 absent - VOTE PASSED

The commission with discuss this change with Auditing at the next commission meeting in February.

Review and Discussion of Fee Comparison

The commission members reviewed and discussed the fees comparison of other municipal cemeteries in the area. It was discussed that some fees do need to be adjusted to align with the area. The commission members decided to review the reasons for wanting to adjust the fees with the Audit Department at the next meeting and recommend and vote on changes at a future meeting. It was also discussed that the changes take place with the next fiscal year that begins July 1, 2025 to give enough notice to Audit, funeral homes and monument companies.

Items not reasonably anticipated by Chairman at time of posting

DO stated that it has been a while since the commission discussed making the cemetery ADA compliant. He stated that the roadways that were repaved were widened to meet the requirements and that this will continue in the spring with the paving project. DO also stated that he will look at the small step on the walkway into the columbarium area to see what needs to be done to allow for a wheelchair to be able to get onto the pathway. SC stated that the water spickets also need to be at a certain height, it is believed this may have already been done, but that they will need to check with the foreman to verify. SC also stated that we should look into the doorknob height also. It was also stated that the building does not have a ramp. DO stated they had looked into a ramp before but more research will need to be done.

DO made a motion to adjourn, EH second the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:38 a.m.
All in favor.