

Ripton Cemetery Commission Meeting May 7, 2014

In attendance: Cheryl Larocque, Liz Walker, Charles Billings, Lisa Knickerbocker, Bonnie Swan

Liz to mail future minutes to Bonnie Swan at Box 603, E. Middlebury

- 1) Charles suggested we approve the minutes from April 2, 2014 meeting –A motion was made by Lisa, seconded by Bonnie. Minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

- 2) A) Charles gave a summary of the meeting he and Perry Hanson had with Thomas Corbin, Assistant Treasurer & Business Director of Middlebury College on April 25, 2014. See attachment 2A.
B) Cheryl did not find a pet cemetery covenant in any Upson deed of land to Middlebury College dating as far back as 1926. Cheryl provided a composite map from the town office showing the location of the Galvin Cemetery in relation to the land parcels previously owned by the Upsons and donated to Middlebury College. See attachment 2B-1. Bonnie brought to our attention a letter dated 10/4/1994 from Polly (Upson) Kahler to Bonnie (Clark) Swan. In it Ms. Upson states that the pet cemetery was located close to the back fence of the Galvin (cemetery) and that the original carved monuments were missing when she looked for them prior to 1994. See attachment 2B-2. Bonnie says that the large brush pile should be moved in order to be sure the markers are not underneath it. The brush pile has been added to and been in the same spot for years. It is large enough to require a tractor to move it.
C) Charles provided an update regarding bids from engineering firms for platting the Cook and Galvin cemeteries. Two contacts were made: John Benson of Dubois & King, and Brendan Streicher of Phelps Engineering. Awaiting quotes.
D) Per our vote at the April 4th meeting, commissioners signed the form, provided by Sally Hoyler, requesting \$294.86 be returned from the cemetery fund to the Ripton Historical Society, money that should not have been removed from the Ripton Historical Society when Bonnie DeGray moved last year. Form will be submitted to Sally Hoyler; Ripton Town Clerk/Treasurer
E) Flags for Veteran's graves - Lisa spoke with Tracy Harrington at the RES regarding a school project to place flags on the graves of Veterans in Ripton for Memorial Day. Tracy said she would like a speaker to explain the purpose of the flags. Follow up calls by Lisa went unanswered. Several members of the commission discussed asking Roger Larocque to speak to the RES children since he is a veteran and the kids are familiar with him as the former school janitor. Roger's son Isaac was also suggested as a speaker. Lisa will contact Tracy again to suggest having both Roger and Isaac, if they agree, talk to the school children about the veterans' graves and discuss the wars represented in the Ripton Cemeteries. Bonnie will have the flags available.
F) Rules and Regulations for Ripton Public Cemeteries – Charles prepared a draft for the commissioners to review. See attachment 2F. By-Laws from the previous Ripton Cemetery Association (copy of By-Laws distributed last month) no longer apply since the Ripton cemeteries are now operated by the municipality of Ripton through the elected Commissioners.

The document is similar to those from other Vermont towns with consideration for state burial and cemetery laws. Commissioners agreed to review the Rules and Regulation documents and bring comments and suggestions to the June 4th meeting.

G) Discussion of items on the "Considerations for the May 2014 Meeting" document distributed at the April 2nd meeting. See attachment 2G-1 – The group began discussing some items like corner post materials, minimum vault requirements for burials, flowers, headstones, other grave decorations, etc. but decided to review rules and regulations and other cemetery guideline materials outside of the meeting before further discussion.

Current Plot Plan & Sales - The Commission reviewed the plot map on record for the Cook cemetery which Bonnie provided. See attachment 2G-2. The cemetery currently has plots laid out in rows A-I and lots 1-9 for each row. Lots (1-9) are further subdivided into A, B, C & D. The original, historic section of the cemetery is not detailed on this map. Bonnie stated that plots are sold in 4 different sizes: 4'X12' for 1 person, 8'X12' for 2 people, 12'X12' for 3 people, and 16'X12' for 4 people. Currently the prices are \$200, \$300, \$400 and \$500 based on 1 – 4 people. These prices include "perpetual care" which will no longer be a separate charge since the cemetery is no longer run by an incorporated association. It was noted that Salisbury charges \$600, and Lincoln charges \$500 for plots (sizes?) and suggested that we may want to collect more information regarding pricing in case our prices are lower than they should be. Bonnie mentioned that the original part of the Cemetery is different from the new in that burials faced east, therefore "head" stones may be at the foot of the grave. All agreed that the original part of the cemetery should be mapped out at some point.

Bonnie also mentioned that often debris is left at the cemetery. It was suggested that a compost box and signage asking people to dispose of organic waste there may help the situation, and we should add signs asking people to remove trash. The Commission should plan on a cleanup of the cemeteries twice (2X) per year.

- 3) A) Charles provided an estimated budget for an 18 month period for 2014-2015. See attachment 3A. Charles suggested the budget be shared with the Ripton Select board. A motion was made by Cheryl and seconded by Bonnie to forward the budget to the Ripton Select Board. It was passed by unanimous vote. We also agreed that the figures should be updated as more solid estimates come in. Charles will give the proposed budget document to the Ripton Select Board.
 - 1) Mowing Bids – We currently have Chris Smith mowing; it has not gone out to bid in recent years since Chris does the job for a low price. It is too late now to change so we will use Chris for 2014, running May through September. Next year the Commission needs to put the job out to bid by the March meeting. We need to give 2 weeks' notice in the newspaper with an April 1, 2015 deadline for bids. Those considered must have insurance. It was noted that Lincoln does not put mowing out to bid, Weybridge and Cornwall do.
 - 2) Charles suggested that the Sexton be paid a modest fee for her many services and that was included in the proposed budget. A motion was made by Lisa, and

seconded by Cheryl to compensate the Sexton \$500 per year. It was passed by unanimous vote.

B). A draft of responsibilities of the Cemetery Sexton was handed out by Charles. This description more closely reflects Bonnie's responsibilities as Sexton of the Ripton cemeteries vs. Sexton "Officer" description distributed at the April meeting. See attachment 3B.

C) Forms – one form currently used by the Sexton when selling grave plots is the current deed with Ripton Cemetery Association Inc. as conveyor. See attachment 3C-1. Charles proposed that we replace that document with one titled Certificate of Burial Rites. See attachment 3C-2. Other Vermont towns, Stowe for example, use the Burial Rites document instead of a deed to better reflect what a person is actually paying for. A deed implies ownership of the piece of land where the alternative document states that a buyer is paying for the exclusive right and privilege of burial and perpetual care of the lot. The commission members agreed to consider this change, and deferred a decision to a future date.

Next Meeting will be June 4th, at 7:30 PM at the Ripton Town Office.

Attachments:

Agenda for May 7, 2014 meeting, #1- Approved minutes of April 2, 2014 meeting, #2A-Summary of meeting between Charles, Perry Hanson and Thomas Corbin of Middlebury College 4/25/14, #2B-1- Composite map showing location of Galvin Cemetery amongst Upson properties donated to Middlebury College, #2B-2- Polly Upson letter to Bonnie Swan dated 10/4/1994 regarding the family pet graves, #2F- Draft of Rules & Regulations for Ripton Public Cemeteries, #2-G-1- Discussion Document handed out at April 4th meeting, #2G-2-Plot map on record for Cook Cemetery, #2G-3, computer map of New Portion of Cook cemetery by CA Billings 1997, #3-A- Proposed 18 month Cemetery Commission Budget 2014-2015, #3-B- Cemetery Sexton description sourced from Graveside Chronicles by Linda K. Lewis, #3C-1- Ripton Cemetery Association Deed, #3C-2- New Certificate of Burial Rites