

# DURHAM CEMETERY COMPANY

September 2, 2009

## REVISED MINUTES

Vice-President Barbara Olsen called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. in the Durham Town Hall third floor meeting room.

**Officers and Directors Present:** Greg Burritt, Kim Garvis, Laura Francis, Barbara Olsen, Mary DiMella, Tom Palmieri, Dolores Caturano, Peg Atwell, Hugh Curley (via speaker phone), Gerry Brown, Dick Olsen, Ken Jay.

**Secretary's Report:** All deeds have been processed and mailed and cemetery maps have been notated. Mr. Kwieraga came in to express his thanks for allowing his brother-in-law to be buried at Mica Hill. He was very appreciative of the board's decision. The secretary has attended two training sessions with HMIS and the assistant secretary has attended one training session. HMIS has updated the software program to include Block 6 and Block 7. One question to be answered was whether or not double depth graves exist at Mica Hill. Though double depth graves were initially planned for at Mica Hill, the presence of stone/ledge prohibits double burials.

Terence, Tree Warden, was called to remove the tree on the north side of the ~~Old~~ **Center** Cemetery in back of Town Hall. Bob Atwell had reported to the secretary that the stone wall is collapsing due to this tree. If no progress is made within a couple of weeks, the secretary will contact the First Selectman about having this tree removed.

The secretary received a letter from Pat John which was addressed to the "Town Clerk." Ms. John is concerned about the care of the ~~Old~~ **Center** Cemetery and the condition of her mother's (Bertha Crawford) grave. She was told the holes around the grave would be filled in, leveled, and grass planted. There is also damage to the stone. She visits the gravesite frequently even though she lives out-of-state. She also stated other people have complained about the condition of this cemetery.

Motion by Barbara Olsen, seconded by a few to accept the secretary's report as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Barbara Olsen, seconded by a few to accept minutes of the May 6, 2009 meeting as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

**Sexton's Report:** Sexton's Report for the period ending 9-2-09. There was one burial, three cremations, and two lots sold at Mica Hill Cemetery. Settled graves were filled and seeded. All three cemeteries have been mowed on a ten day schedule.

Hugh expressed concern about the location of the Lynch plots and whether these were in the way of the future roadway. Ken answered no.

Peg is concerned about the condition of the ~~Old~~ **Center** Cemetery, in back of Town Hall. Many of the stones are full of grass, especially the flat stones. Ken replied the only way to clear the stones is by blowing off debris. He continued, there has been so much rain this year – it has been hard to keep up. If he were to bag the grass, the cost to the Cemetery Company would double. Barbara agreed with Ken and stated that everyone has had a hard time keeping up with the yard work this summer.

Ken explained there has not been a dry period to reset stones. He was finally paid for the extra work done to repair the damage caused by Wilbert Vault Company to the Stender grave during Kwieraga's brother-in-law's burial. Greg added there is nothing that can be done about the tree that was damaged but this information should be on record in case the tree needs to be replaced.

Motion by Dolores Caturano, seconded by Laura Francis and Dick Olsen to accept the sexton's report as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Treasurer's Report:**

Tom reported normal expenses. 2008-2009 end of fiscal year came in a little better than budgeted. Interest and dividend income is still sufficient to take care of ongoing expenses. Dividend income is beginning to increase slightly. The market seems to have stabilized and the income should be sufficient for the next year, however, that could all change. Tom commented he does not believe "we're out of the woods yet" and he would not be surprised to see another dramatic downfall in the market. The next fiscal budget is similar to this year's budget and will be voted on in November.

There has been no activity since the last meeting. The portfolio had recovered substantially by August 31<sup>st</sup> and then the market took another tumble on September 1<sup>st</sup>. The financial advisor stated having cash at this time is ok. Perhaps, if the economy does improve, some of that cash could be invested. Before the next meeting Tom will review all holdings again with the financial advisor.

Motion by Laura Francis, seconded by Greg Burritt to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

**President's Report:** Hugh thanked everyone and stated it has been a pleasure working with the members of the Durham Cemetery Company. He stated Gerry is willing to consider being President. He has also contacted Ken DiVito, and Ken may be interested in joining the Cemetery Company.

Motion by Laura Francis, seconded by Peg and others to approve the President's report. Motion passed unanimously

### **Old Business**

1. **Plantings**, etc. Greg stated the front entrance will be mulched soon. All the junk was cleaned out. Next year he would like to do some more plantings. Next year he

will work on Block 7 and some trees will be planted. Ken will help Greg lay a line. Crabapples or dogwood trees might be a good idea. Family Tree Care was supposed to come by to do some work but did not show. Diversifying the types of trees is suggested because if a disease hits, all the trees could be destroyed.

Tom commented that some of the trees should be removed because they've gotten too big. Ken added, the grass is degrading under these trees because of the constant shade. The cherry trees are too big and Family Tree Care has the expertise to take care of the trees. Ken agreed the trees need to be thinned out and pruned. Dogwoods would be a good choice because they are slow growing trees and they don't get too big.

Ken commented the same mistakes should not be repeated with the new section and Laura added there must be some industry standard as far as plantings. Gerry did some research in the Meriden Cemetery and plantings are usually used as a dividing section. Trees are not planted anymore because they are too much trouble to care for. Laura commented that when the new section is laid out, better planning should be done to not include trees. Greg agreed that shrubs would be better. Laura added this is a cemetery not a park. Barbara commented she would not want to radically change the plantings. Cedar Hill in Hartford is a floral cemetery and is lovely. Barbara stated we can moderate plantings in the new area.

2. Gerry has agreed to run for President.

Motion by Dick Olsen, seconded by Laura Francis and others to nominate Gerry Brown as President of the Durham Cemetery Company. On a voice vote with none in opposition, Gerry Brown was voted in, unanimously, as the new President of the Durham Cemetery Company.

3. Gerry reported that he reviewed fees of cemeteries in surrounding towns and all of them charge more than Durham (from \$800 to \$950), and they all charge an additional fee for Saturday and Sunday burials, and additional fees for winter burials. Gerry also reported that other cemeteries have funds set aside to match family contributions toward stone repair since this is such a problem. The family puts up half and the cemetery puts up half toward the required repairs.

Discussion continued about increasing fees. Mary is concerned about the fee increase and posed the question, "Is the Durham Cemetery Company in the business of making money or an adjunct of the town?" Tom replied the DCC breaks even and he agreed with Mary that the pricing should not be set at a rate to make money; however, a little cushion would be helpful to cover unforeseen problems as they arise. Gerry's point was to show that the DCC is priced low. Hugh added that additional money could be used as in the case recently when a large stone was hit and it cost additional money to remove the stone. If Hazelwood increases prices then the DCC would need to increase prices.

Gerry and other members agreed that fees for weekend burials should be increased with the additional fees to go to the sexton. Gerry added that other cemeteries charge as much as \$500 for a Sunday burial. Cremains buried on a Sunday should be charged an extra \$200 with this money also going to the sexton. Once a person is cremated, the state considers the person "buried." At this point the family can do whatever they want with the ashes; there is no requirement to actually bury the ashes in a cemetery. The family could bury the ashes in their back yard if they so wished. Gerry added some churches have memorial gardens just for burying ashes.

Tom asked Ken how many Saturday burials he's done and Ken answered quite a few.

**Motion by Tom Palmieri, seconded by Laura Francis, for any burial outside the usual workweek of Monday through Friday, not including holidays, an additional charge of \$100 be assessed for Saturday burials and \$150 for Sunday burials. This money will flow through the normal process. The sexton will inform the Funeral Homes of the added fee and the sexton will bill the Durham Cemetery Company. On a voice vote with none in opposition the motion passed.**

4. Peg reported there is a headstone leaning up against Town Hall that needs to be returned to its site.

**New Business:**

1. Gerry asked if there are many 4 family plots and does the DCC have anything in place such as a burial assignment when the owner dies leaving empty plots?

Much discussion continued surrounding the issue of who has the right to the remaining burial plots when the owner of record dies:

- a. oldest child should have first rights,
- b. the second spouse should have the right,
- c. whomever has actual possession of the deed,
- d. this shouldn't be the cemetery's responsibility,
- e. should the sexton ask what the buyers intention is,
- f. problem with disinterments – especially if an infant burial – one parent has the right to disinter without informing the other parent
- g. Gerry will research this topic to find out what other cemeteries do in this matter.

Adjourn: Motion by several, seconded and passed to adjourn at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kim Garvis  
Secretary