Walnut Hills Cemetery Trustees Meeting  
Wednesday, March 11, 2020  
8:30am – 9:30am

**Trustees Present:** Robert Cook, Gerard Hayes, Lisa Farber, Randolph Meiklejohn and Peggy Maguire  
**Trustees Absent:** Joslin Ham Murphy  
**Staff Present:** Erin Gallentine, Director of Parks and Open Space, Jessica White, Parks and Open Space Assistant  
**Guests Present:** Lisa Farber, Randolph Meiklejohn, Jeana Franconi, Town Treasurer

1. **Welcome and Approval of the Minutes**

The Trustees introduced themselves to one another.  
R. Cook opened the meeting. R. Cook moved to approve the December 18, 2019 minutes. All in favor.

2. **Sign Deeds**

The deeds were passed around and signed by the Trustees. The Cemetery software where the deeds are scanned was discussed.

3. **Walnut Hills Cemetery Update**

E. Gallentine stated that the roadway and drainage project is going out to bid and the bids will be open in April. The roadway overall in the Walnut Hills Cemetery has sections in very poor condition. A general conditions assessment was completed for the cemetery and areas prioritized for resurfacing. The prioritized areas were discussed. In many areas the pavement around the drainage structures leading to poor storm water management. The Trustees have decided the next priority project is the section of the cemetery at the back of Willow Ave. A map of the area was shared with the Trustees. There is $125,000 set aside for the next phase of pavement restoration. Abutters have also voiced their concern regarding drainage from this area. There is also an area that regularly ponds that will be addressed as part of the improvement. The storm water system in the cemetery was discussed. Environmental Partners has been brought in to do a full drainage analysis of the cemetery. The consultants inspected all of the catch basins and overall condition of the cemetery drainage system.
There is a planting plan for the back edge of the cemetery and it will be implemented once the repairs are complete. There is also an edge treatment that Nina Brown has encouraged the Trustees to look at. This will be implemented in phases. The planting will be done by town staff.

E. Gallentine detailed the tree work at the cemetery.

E. Gallentine provided background information and an update on the Lau deed and lots. She stated that, at the last meeting, the Trustees voted to allow Mrs. Lau to purchase two additional lots and replace the 8 lots she had a deed for now totaling a 10 lot site. E. Gallentine spoke with Mrs. Lau about purchasing these lots for the current resident rate; however, Mrs. Lau felt that it was not compensation for the hardship she endured. It is important to Mrs. Lau that the families be buried together in a certain location. She stated that the lots were precisely thought out and planned. She feels that Town is at fault, and understands that E. Gallentine and staff are doing the best they can given the situation. Mrs. Lau again requested that she be permitted to purchase the two additional lots for the price she paid in 1992. E. Gallentine recommended that the Trustees reconsider their vote and allow Mrs. Lau to purchase two additional lots for the price she paid in 1992. E. Gallentine thinks there will be lot of work to find out what else is missing. She has been doing some research with town staff. She stated that there was a period in the early 90’s when they were just putting different maintenance folks in positions at Walnut Hills Cemetery to keep operations going. She thinks that we might find that there could be other problems in terms of documentation and paper work. She recommends that we honor the request of Mrs. Lau to be able to purchase this additional double lot for $337.50. She feels like it is more about trying to apologize, make it right for her family and figure you what we do in the future if we find others. E. Gallentine stated that we will do an audit. J. Ronan has started this audit and E. Gallentine is planning to bring a consultant/part-time staff in to help go through every record at the Cemetery and the Town Clerk’s office. She stated that we are also working on full standard operating procedures, so anyone that will come into the cemetery in the future will understand explicitly every step required to run the Walnut Hills Cemetery. She thinks this will benefit the division. G. Hayes stated that he has a few issues agreeing to any of this. First, it was not just the omission, but someone wrote hold against the deed and then someone whitewashed the sale. There was more going on; whether the check bounced or minds were changed, he doesn’t know. He thinks because of those two things he doesn’t think she has everything on her side. He agrees to give her the 8 lots but to buy extra lots at the old price is giving too much. The hold/not sold issue doesn’t sound like it was ever answered and it can’t be. P. Maguire sees we have a problem, are working to solve it and we should apologize and move forward. R. Meiklejohn and E. Gallentine discussed the price difference between the lots now and in 1992. E. Gallentine and Mrs. Lau walked the cemetery together and agreed to the location. It is in the same area but it’s not contiguous. R. Cook feels that inevitably in organizations there are mistakes from history that come into the present. He supports the work plan to put together procedures to minimize these problems in the future. L. Farber stated that we are doing the right thing by her and keeping her happy.

R. Cook moved forward the motion to sell Mrs. Lau the additional lots she desires at the 1992 discounted price. 4 in favor. G. Hayes opposed.

An HMIS software update was given. E. Gallentine gave background into the history of the software. The company is going to the cloud and will no longer support the windows based version. It will take 12 months to make the full conversion with them. She discussed the meeting she had with the company to talk about what this conversion would look like. They have provided the Town with costs. They will take all of the Town of Brookline’s information and convert it to the new platform. The platform does look different but the Town will ultimately get more out of the annual subscription.
than they do right now. The conversion price is $13,000 and they estimate the annual subscription fee will be just shy of $3,000, which is where it is right now. The cost could go up depending on the data storage. E. Gallentine stated that IT likes working with Batesville. They find that they are very responsive. The plan is to move forward with them, because moving to another company would be risky and the Town feels that they have a great software package. It will take 5-7 months to convert all of the data to the new system. G. Hayes and E. Gallentine discussed how HMIS is uniquely qualified; in essence they are a sole source provider for the Town now. L. Farber wonders whether with this software one can go online and find where their relatives are buried. E. Gallentine replied that there is not a public interface software because it is a management tool. She stated that it does not have a public portal. The Town of Brookline uses this software for the business of running the cemetery. E. Gallentine stated that this can be discussed as a possible add-on with Batesville in the future.

P. Maguire discussed a cemetry she had recently visited that allowed one to go up to a kiosk, put in a name and get basic information. She thought that was fantastic.

A YTD budget summary was given to all the Trustees. The accounts are very healthy. The non-expendable trust amount was discussed. The amounts in SW01, TW23 and TW24 were detailed. E. Gallentine explained in detail what each account is.

4. Old Burial Ground Update

E. Gallentine has mentioned this before, but wanted to reiterate what great partners the Friends of the Old Burying Ground are. There is a little extra work in the old Burying Ground that the Town and the Friends have been focusing on over the last two years. The Fannins are working on an updated Conditions Assessment on all the stones and markers and are working on some special stone restoration. A copy of the report was shared with the Trustees. They completed beautiful work on the Griggs and the Ogden Cross. E. Gallentine detailed the plan for the upcoming year. The Fannins are very unique in what they do and the Town really wants to work with them to get as much done as possible in the Old Burying Ground. L. Farber discussed a great article on the Fannins that was in the Brookline Tab. She agreed that they do absolutely great work and the Friends and the Town are eager to continue to work with them. R. Cook stated that they are a small company and he wonders if they have a succession plan. L. Farber discussed the Foster Fence work. E. Gallentine stated that the tombs restored several years ago still need the doors and hardware. E. Gallentine stated that there is a new part-time Parks landscape architect who is working on that with the Engineering Division. E. Gallentine stated that the money that is available for the tomb work and doors at the Old Burying Ground came out of the General Fund. P. Maguire wonders if you could get money from the federal government. E. Gallentine stated that the Town has been successful in receiving grants in the past and that this is something that we should keep our eyes on.

5. Green Burials

E. Gallentine provided the Trustees with a primer regarding Green Burials. The Town of Lexington has designated one section of their cemetery for green burials. They just started this year. They permit it with regulations. E. Gallentine listed these regulations. L. Farber stated that it is becoming more and more popular. E. Gallentine discussed these various burials. Earth settlement was discussed amongst the Trustees. E. Gallentine and the Trustees discussed a future build out of another section within the cemetery and the opportunity to include a green burial option.
6. Other Business

P. Maguire and E. Gallentine discussed off leash dogs in Walnut Hills Cemetery. The Trustees discussed having the next meeting at WHC and then going for a field trip to The Gardens at Gethsemane Cemetery in West Roxbury.

7. Adjourn

R. Cook moved to adjourn. Seconded by P. Maguire. All in favor.