

**TOWN OF LUDLOW
BOARD OF CEMETERY COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
HOWARD BARTON, JR. CONFERENCE ROOM**

Wednesday, August 16, 2023

Board Members Present:

Bob Brandt	Bruce Schmidt	Herb Van Guilder
Lou Gabranski	Shannon Stark	

Staff Present:

Brendan McNamara	Doug Sheehan
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1. Call to Order

A. Bob Brandt called the meeting at 5:04.

2. Consideration of Changes, Additions or Removal to the Agenda

A. Brendan McNamara said that no changes are necessary.

3. Comments from Citizens

A. There were none.

4. Approve Minutes of Previous Meeting

A. Bob Brandt said that the minutes to be reviewed are from May 17, 2023.

B. Motion by Bruce Schmidt and seconded by Louie Gabranski to accept the minutes from May 17, 2023 as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

5. Sexton's Report

A. Consensus to accept the Sexton's Report for June and July as submitted.

6. Buildings & Grounds Report

A. Consensus to accept the Buildings and Grounds Report for July as submitted.

7. Seasonal Goals

- A. Brendan McNamara said that at the last meeting the board had discussed prioritizing project for the season and that he had met with Kevin MacPherson on this.
- i. Repairs on the back fence – should we go with split rail or chain link. Price from Springfield Fence – Upper level, chain link, about 132 feet of 4 foot high - \$4,620 and lower level about 92 feet \$3,325

- a) Herb Van Guilder said that they should look at the complete cemetery now that David Rose has completed the survey. He said that the upper, back section needs to be treed out.
- b) Brendan McNamara said they can look to define the property lines. To repair the back section would cost about \$376.
- c) Herb Van Guilder said we should look into other styles.
- ii. Repairs to the entry stone walls – Brendan McNamara said that to remove and replace the concrete walls would cost about \$18,000 per wall, the left side is not as bad as the right side
 - a) Shannon Stark asked if it would make sense to do both at once
 - b) Brendan McNamara said yes
- iii. Repave by the spillway across from the upper gate and expand the driveway. Brendan McNamara advised that at first we suggested doing this work in-house. He said since the flood it has become more of a problem. and was completely filled in. We are looking to have A1 come in and seen if they can suck out the area to preserve it. Now is the time to do it and the survey changed the property lines on the Gill Home side. The spillway is a habitual problem. He said the drainage ditch is working now, but probably not for long. There is a potential for FEMA funds to help.
- iv. Herb Van Guilder said that the culvert along the driveway should be one project. It floods every year
 - v. Brendan McNamara said there may be some funding available. Now is the time to get on this. We need to have something in the works before the spring melt.
 - vi. Shannon Stark asked how long do we have to apply for FEMA funds
 - vii. Brendan McNamara said we were just assigned the town advisor today. Everything has been documented. He will talk to the advisor tomorrow.
 - viii. Bruce Schmidt asked Brendan McNamara to come back with a plan. We do have funds in the Capital account. We can look into doing the whole thing of doing it in phases. We need an estimate and what we want to get done this year.
 - ix. Brendan McNamara said we will try to do what we can in-house. He said that the flow off the top needs help and we need a rake cage to capture the debris in the runoff.
 - x. Shannon Stark asked who would clean it out
 - xi. Brendan McNamara suggested A1 or the company that did the work at the Water/Waste Water plant.
 - xii. Bruce Schmidt said it would be helpful if Brendan McNamara could supply pictures of the fences and locations. There are bid projects there and the abutters expect us to keep things looking good. The fences need work.
 - xiii. Bob Brandt said the worst part is at the end where they took out the trees.
 - xiv. Bruce Schmidt said we can't be afraid of the cost to do the fencing. It has been there a long time.
 - xv. Brendan McNamara said it we replace what is needed; it will last a long time. He said there is about \$96,000 - \$97,000 in the Capital account/

8. **Directory Update**

- A. Brendan McNamara said he is working with Do Little to get approval for the sign. We will have something for the September meeting.

9. **New Business**

- A. Cemetery Budget and Staff
 - i. Herb Van Guilder said that the Cemetery budget is independent from the town and under the control of this board. He noted that \$4,000 to \$6,000 was spent on Cemetery staff working at the Community Center during the flood and he did not approve that.

- ii. Brendan McNamara said that at the time, he did what he felt was in the best interest of the entire community. All of the personnel costs will be reimbursed to the Cemetery budget by FEMA. He said he thought it a better use of personnel to serve the whole community than to have them trimming grass.
 - iii. Herb Van Guilder said the portable bathroom is a waste of money. He said that the Cemetery does not have the flexibility to borrow money like the town and village do.
 - iv. Bruce Schmidt said that he wants it on the record that he approves of the Town Manager and what he felt it necessary to do. He said that nickel and diming and nitpicking is not warranted. The flood was a tremendous event and we can't have the town manager being second guessed by this board. Bruce Schmidt said he feels that the town manager did a great job and did what he had to do.
 - v. Bob Brandt said the two women did a great job at the Community Center in the mornings and then went and worked at the cemetery in the afternoons.
- B. Town Manager Expenditures
- i. Louie Gabranski said that we voted to allow the town manager to approve up to a certain amount of money without coming to this board for approval.
 - ii. Herb Van Guilder said they bought lawnmowers without voting on it.
 - iii. Louie Gabranski said that employees were stealing tools.
 - iv. Brendan McNamara said he would be happy to have the board vote on it all.
 - v. Louie Gabranski asked about legal fees.
 - vi. Brendan McNamara said we are keeping track of the expenses and when all of the final numbers are in. Ulla Cook will move the money back to the Cemetery account. It will provide a clearer trail for the auditors.
 - vii. Doug Sheehan said the board voted on the manager's ability to purchase before the Town took over. The amount was up to \$2,500.00. Also, there is a program in the budget to purchase a new lawnmower every year.
 - viii. Bob Brandt said the lawnmower was in the budget
 - ix. Herb Van Guilder said he thinks we should still look at the bids. He asked what we did with the old one. We are just spending money without the board knowing where.
 - x. Doug Sheehan said we received about \$1,200 for the old one in trade-in.
 - xi. Bruce Schmidt said you are not being fair to think we don't care. He said that personally, he cares about being on this board and has confidence in the town manager. He suggested that an item be put on next month's agenda to have a monthly financial report. He added that other boards have bids opened separately then read and vote on them at their meetings, with recommendations from staff. This board can do that or have the bids opened at these meetings. He said we are walking a fine line. This is a question of integrity and that "Something going on here is not quite right." This frustrates me. He noted that Herb Van Guilder does have more experience.
 - xii. Herb Van Guilder agreed with having monthly financial reports. He said that at no point did he want to show disrespect to other commissioners or the town manager. That was not his intent.
 - xiii. Bruce Schmidt said the financial reports would be for information only.
- C. Cemetery Staff Family
- i. Louie Gabranski said that 3 of the 4 people working at the cemetery are family members and the 4th is a friend of the family. He is concerned that if one person is not happy, they will all leave. We need to put them under contract for at least one year.
 - ii. Shannon Stark asked that if there were to be contracts, do we give them raises.
 - iii. Louie Gabranski said the same as the town personnel.
 - iv. Bruce Schmidt said if they become contractors, they have to provide their own insurance and handle their own taxes. We are a small town and there are going to be situations where staff is family or friends. We rely on the Sexton and Town Manager to deal with any possible issues. He doesn't think this is a problem and we should thank them for the great job they do.
 - v. Brendan McNamara said it falls to him to – as with any other department - to foster a positive atmosphere. Vermont is an At-Will state and employees can walk away at any time. He said the

staff at the cemetery take tremendous pride in the Cemetery. He added that Kevin MacPherson has been here 20+ years and if something did happen, Brendan McNamara said he would hope that we could head it off.

- vi. Herb Van Guilder said we are fortunate to have a family of such good workers who take pride in the cemetery and parks. He said he is proud of the.

10. **Other Business**

- A. None

11. **Set Date for Next Meeting**

- A. Next regular meeting - Wednesday, September 20, 2023 at 5:00 p.m.

12. **Sign Warrant Orders**

- A. The warrant orders have been signed.

13. **Possible Executive Session/Personnel/Contracts/Legal Issues**

- A. Brendan McNamara said an Executive Session is not needed.

14. **Adjourn**

- A. **MOTION by Bruce Schmidt and seconded by Herb Van Guilder to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously.**
- B. Meeting adjourned at 5:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisha Klaiber

Bob Brandt, Chairman

Bruce Schmidt

Louie Gabranski

Herb Van Guilder

Shannon Stark