

Village of Skaneateles
Cemetery Board of Lakeview Cemetery
Regular Meeting – November 15, 2012

Present: Robert Gray, President
Patricia Blackler, Commissioner
Gary Trenti, Commissioner

Patty Couch, Village Clerk/Treasurer
Roben Shappell, Assistant Village Clerk
Mary Sennett, Village Trustee
Barbara Spain, Cemetery Services Clerk
Dennis Dundon, Clerk to the Boards

President Gray called the meeting to order at 9:00.

1. Cemetery Services Clerk – President Gray introduced Barbara Spain as the newly-appointed Cemetery Services Clerk. The Commissioners welcomed her to the position. Commissioner Blackler indicated that she and Trustee Sennett have been discussing this position for some months. She mentioned that templates had been prepared for deeds and deeds in trust documents that might diminish the need to type the documents directly. Ms. Spain indicated that she has not yet received any details regarding the position or its explicit duties, although the awarding of the position to her has been announced.

The forms of the deeds were explained to Ms. Spain. She indicated that the sale of new graves had been specifically identified as an area that would not be part of her duties. President Gray said that he had asked Ms. Shappell to tell the Board what aspects of her daily workload she would like Ms. Spain to assume. Preparation of deeds is a possible area for transfer to the new position.

Comm. Blackler expressed that Ms. Spain was to be the “go to” person for the cemetery, to direct people to gravesites and assist in research. DMO Lotkowitz was identified as the person who would show potential buyers available gravesites.

President Gray said that the continued maintenance of the handwritten record books is something that other cemeteries are providing for. Both computer records and historical records should continue to be maintained.

Ms. Spain indicated that two areas of activity had been discussed with her. One is to bring the historical records up to date. Ms. Shappell stated that the records have been updated through May of this year, and the Historical Society records have been updated through last year. The year-end records are another area for possible transfer to this new position. The Board

encouraged both Ms. Shappell and Ms. Spain to be proactive in designing process and procedures that would make the operations smoother and more effective.

President Gray indicated that the communication generally is not very good, between the Village Office staff, the DPW workers who handle burial functions and the directions from DMO Lotkowitz. Standardized routines, statutory requirements and technology tools should be used to make communications more effective. For example, burial permits must be signed within a stipulated number of days.

The Mayor has expressed understanding of availability issues for Ms. Shappell to handle cemetery record-keeping given her other workloads. This new position should be able to assist in the process.

Trustee Sennett expressed the need for Ms. Spain to innovate and be self-directed since this is “brand new territory.” She continued that Ms. Shappell has been regularly handling inquiries from families requesting some background research be done on the historical burial records. These requests are outside the scope of Ms. Shappell’s position and can be time-consuming. Fulfilling such requests will be one of the primary functions of Ms. Spain’s position.

DMO Lotkowitz is responsible for coordinating the site-preparation work in the event of a burial, handling cemetery visits when someone wishes to purchase a grave, as well as the ongoing maintenance of the grounds.

Ms. Shappell indicated that all entries in the record books for the cemetery must be entered by hand. There is no way to update those records electronically. So some searches require accessing multiple records in order to be complete.

[Commissioner Trenti had to depart]

Trustee Sennett believes that the future should rely on electronic records, with the books representing only historical documents. This would require that complete electronic compilations of the currently-active sections of the cemetery be developed. Commissioner Blackler said that she was looking forward to someday locking up those books and handling everything from electronic records. Ms. Shappell thinks that the Village will be required to maintain the physical record in perpetuity.

Trustee Sennett wondered if there might be software that would allow for the Village to operate Section 11A, the currently active section and possibly Section 6, the previously-active section, from a completely electronic database, if the data from the books was entered in and double-checked. Those procedures then would be in place when additional sections are opened for activity. That should greatly reduce the numbers of times that the books would need to be consulted. President Gray said that Oakwood Cemetery continues to operate electronic and physical record systems.

A general discussion ensued about possible methods of incorporating drawings from the books into a searchable electronic record. Initial efforts to develop an electronic database have not

been rigorously maintained because of the amount of time required to do so in a period of workforce reductions. Trustee Sennett suggested that Ms. Spain evaluate the current state of the systems and try to develop something that will work going forward.

2. Investments – Comm. Trenti reported that he has given a 60 page prospectus on investment options to Mike Byrne in an effort to obtain permission to change investment options to products offering a higher return. President Gray said that if the village cannot achieve higher returns on its monies, that the Board should consider ways to limit new funds going into perpetual care. Ms. Shappell suggested that there may be ways to gain access to some of the principal from old trusts.

3. Upkeep – Tony LoBello has replaced the bushes in Section 11A as discussed at last month’s meeting, within budget. The Village crews did a great job in keeping up with maintenance. None of the Commissioners has received any adverse comments all year.

4. Potential Reburial Fee – Pres. Gray said that this item will remain on the agenda for serious consideration of policy change. A new burial in an occupied location is assessed half the cost of that grave plus the grave opening fee.

5. Transactions –

Section 11A, Lot 279, 2 graves monumented
Deed 238, Book 8
Trust Deed 3250

Harold & Nancy Jensen
3932 Highland Ave.
Skaneateles, NY 13152

Section 6, Lot 132, 2 north+3 north graves monumented
Deed 239, Book 8
Trust Deed 3251

Peggy Pasecznick
24 East Lake St.
Skaneateles, NY 13152

Section 11A, Lot 278, 2 north graves monumented
Deed 240, Book 8
Trust Deed 3252

Bruce Keller
72 East Genesee St.
Skaneateles, NY 13152

Section 11A, Lot 285, 3 graves monumented
Deed 241, Book 8
Trust Deed 3253

Madeline & Ralph Bishop
3824 Depot Rd.
Auburn, NY 13021

Next Meeting – The next regularly scheduled meeting will be held on December 20, 2012 at 9:00 am.

The meeting was adjourned by acclamation at 10:03 am.