

Milton Cemetery Advisory Board Meeting

Tuesday, June 8, 2021

10:00 a.m.

Zoom Meeting

(Advisory Board participated from the Town's Community Room)

MINUTES

- Call to order at 10:03 a.m.
- Present: Jimmy Ballard, Alan Beaupre, John Mayville, Pete Staniels, Don Turner Jr, Kristin Beers, Tom Giffin and Amy-Louise Pfeffer
- Public Forum – None.
- Amy-Louise Pfeffer of the Stone Trust – Gave a presentation regarding Jimmy's inquiry about restoring the cemetery walls in Miltonboro Cemetery. We can visit the Stone Trust website and click on Project referrals to begin the process. Jimmy asked if they can do it like a class, with volunteers helping do the actual work (under supervision) and learn to maintain the walls. Proposed 3 options. 1) Grant funded, hire professional to rebuild wall. 2) Grant funded, hire to rebuild and teach. 3) 2-Day intro class (\$1,000/instructor/day + expenses/mileage). Would need to develop a proposal, and would wrap administrative fees into total. Would have to be in 2022 – not 2021.
- Tom Giffin shared power point about the VT Old Cemetery Association. VOCA offers grants (usually \$1,000), Veteran stones can be repaired by Federal government at no cost, Tom uses any volunteers he can find (football team, school-aged kids), repairs vandalism, replaces stones, moved a cemetery (the case went to supreme court - and now that process requires an archaeologist and permits). For cleaning stones, Tom recommends D/2 Biological Solution only. Work date set for August 1st at 8:00 am in the older section of Village Cemetery.
- Discussion about hiring Stone Trust to repair stone walls – seemed too expensive. Don suggested maybe finding a local alternative, maybe Everett Ridley.
- Parking issues at Miltonboro Cemetery discussed.
- John Mayville spoke about moving Old (abandoned) West Milton Cemetery to the new West Milton Cemetery. Was brought to voters years ago and approved. But may need to hire archeologists – based on Tom's presentation. Jimmy expressed concern if there is enough space in the new cemetery. Alan pointed out there will be no coffins or vaults, so each burial won't require much more space than cremains would. In 1872 Mr. Fields had contract to move stones and remains – did not complete the project. Don Turner and board members agreed to do some research.
- Jimmy Ballard spoke about ongoing controversy about a family situation. Reminded board members to please use discretion when discussing information learned during meetings.

- General Stannard stones – There are stones from General Stannard’s property that could be moved to, and used in, the new section of the Village Cemetery. (Clarified not headstones.) John Mayville asked if the General Stannard Committee would need the stones to rebuild the house? It was the committee’s idea to move them to the cemetery. Discussion followed.
- Peter Staniels read through his report, item by item:
 - With the exception of Checkerberry, The Plains, and section 6 of The Village Cemetery, ALL cemetery sites need attention given to the cleaning and straightening of headstones. In addition, the trimming of trees and shrubbery is an ongoing issue.
 - **VILLAGE SITE:**
 - Erect an **Information board** to display an enlarged laminated **map** of sections 4 5 & 6 near, but not at, the main entrance. Perhaps announcements such as "Clean-up Day" could be placed there as well as a web address to link to more information etc.
 - Hire a **professional** person to **power wash** stones en mass, (cheaper by the dozen). This service would include many of the stones visible along the entranceway road as well.
 - Place **row markers** every 10 rows along the interior road (sections 4 & 5) to go along with the aforementioned map to aid service people and/or relatives in finding grave sites. (These already exist in section 6 though not in an obvious manner).
 - Have the existing **trash receptacle** emptied on a regular basis to avoid visitors throwing decorations over the bank into the ravine. Don Turner confirmed that this has improved.
 - Erect a **snow fence** along the edge of the ravine to help avoid dumping.
 - Repair or reconstruction of the **iron gate** at the entrance way (including lock & chain) OR erect a **cross bar gate** just beyond the vault. This is necessary for protection against road damage in the off season.
 - And we can never forget the trees - they are old and deteriorating. Significant trimming or removal is in order.
 - **CHECKERBERRY SITE:**
 - Seek out retired carpenter or handyperson to repair the **wooden fence** along the sides and rear of the cemetery.
 - Reclaim the **headstone** removed for repairs 2 years ago but never returned. (Tool Wizard)
 - Install the new **sign**.

- **THE PLAINS SITE:**
- Revisit cemetery for the purpose of straightening a couple of leaning stones and **touch-up cleaning**.
- Install a **sign**.
- **WEST MILTON SITE:**
- Cleaning & straightening headstones plus tree trimming.
- Install a new **sign**.
- **MILTONBORO SITE:**
- Create a **new entranceway** at the rear of the current utilized area beyond the stone walls that enclose the cemetery on 3 of its sides.
- The area is currently overgrown with sumac trees, brush etc. There is a wire fence in which we would be able to cut for a gateway more easily accessible to traffic.
- This would also allow closer/easier access to gravesites via automobile.
- Create a long term plan for the restoration of the **stone walls** hereinbefore mentioned.
- Install a new **sign**.
- **AUSTIN FAMILY SITE:**
- This site needs considerable restoration, starting with the clearing of brush, trees, and other overgrowth. Town employee Justin Bergeron has been doing a yeoman's job by himself thus far. This site was scheduled for a clean-up day in 2019, but volunteers were absent that day.
- 3 of 4 **corner markers** have been located. I suggest that **corner posts** be installed with rails attached (from post to ground) pointing toward the adjacent corners, thus delineating the cemetery boundaries.
 - Note: New residential housing has been constructed on two sides of the site. The good news is that there is now a road leading directly to the front of the site, but an **access pathway** needs to be created between the road and the cemetery itself.
- Create and install a **sign**.
- **GARDENER ROAD SITE; (Mars Hollow)**
- This site is also well maintained by Justin Bergeron. Attention to leaning and fallen headstones is always in order. This is another very old cemetery, rumored to contain the remains of at least one of the Green Mountain Boys.
- **{ OTHER SITES }** Candidly, I am devoting the majority of my time to the Village site b/c that's where the action is. I visit the others on occasion or when an issue is brought to my attention.

- Very few of these recommendations/suggestions can or will be done without significant improvements to manpower and financing resources. We will need to explore just what resources the town is able to provide (stimulus monies perhaps?) as well as in-kind donations from tradespeople, and other philanthropy that may be available.
 - Correct me if I am wrong, but I see The "Friends of the Milton Cemeteries" as being an important component of our ability to meet any of these goals. Recruiting of volunteers needs to be an ongoing campaign ie: PSA in the newspaper and Front Page Forum. The same goes for finding sponsors for certain initiatives ie: VFW to help with the cleaning veteran's graves etc. Retirees like myself are often looking for something meaningful to do. Students need community projects for school credits and same for [aka Boy] Scouts seeking an Eagle badge.
 - I would like to see a volunteer or 2 who would commit to strolling through a particular cemetery of their choosing 1X per month, notifying me directly of anything amiss. Items such as fallen trees or branches, newly disturbed gravesites or decorations/momentos etc. that may need attention caused by wind or whatever. Perhaps a neighbor or a family member of a decedent buried there would be open to helping out.
 - Project - have a volunteer (student?) create a searchable spreadsheet for the Village cemetery in particular, showing names of decedents and/or persons with burial rights. ALSO show any vacant or abandoned plots that may be available. Perhaps this could be viewed online (password protected) for authorized use. This would also be valuable in some of the older sites before the names become illegible.
- Don Turner will get a price quote to fix up the concrete at the front entrance of the Village Cemetery, which will help fix the gate.
 - There should be more than one key to the Village Cemetery storage vault – currently held by Minor Funeral Home. Discussion and agreement that another copy should be made for the Town.
 - Alan Beaupre suggested paperwork from Funeral Home could be updated to mention “buried” or “ashes taken by family”.
 - Need to advertise the August 1st Cemetery Work Day. Social media, sign at the River Street Park, sign at the cemetery, etc.
 - Don Turner will research the VT statutorial requirements of relocating a cemetery. There is \$5,000 that is set aside and can only be used to relocate a cemetery.
 - Meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.