



Greenwood Cemetery

DRAFT Minutes

WESTON CEMETERY COMMITTEE

Town Hall Commission Room

Wednesday, March 24, 2010 at 7:30PM

PRESENT: Present: Richard Wolf, Pam Bochinski, Hal Mathews, Stewart Pearl, Benjamin Hume; Ernie Albin, Commission on Aging; Margaret Wirtenberg. Guests: Carole Reichhelm, President, Deborah Truhowsky, Manager, Willowbrook Cemetery, Westport.

The meeting was called to order by Chair. Richard Wolf at @7:35pm.

DISCUSSION OF CEMETERY MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Chair. Wolf introduced Carole Reichhelm and Debbie Truhowsky, operators of Willowbrook in Westport, who described that cemetery's history and management. Begun perhaps 200 years ago, Willowbrook had served Westport for years in a private capacity as a cemetery association. The management of Willowbrook changed over time.

It became a commercially run cemetery some time ago, and has since that time reverted to a non-profit facility.

Ms. Reichhelm described how it was important to have a professional vision/plan for a cemetery from a landscape architect.

Starting a cemetery is very different from developing an older property already devoted to that use. The amount of acreage in a cemetery should provide for long term expansion. As the development of plots proceeds, there should be a way to keep track of who is buried where - a map of where these graves are must be produced, and kept updated. Electronic mapping is now something Willowbrook is doing.

The circulation plan changes as new areas are developed for graves. Keeping the ground level and safe is something that must be monitored. It was suggested that funding for maintenance and upkeep was critical. It is necessary to have staff or outsource this function.

The size of a cemetery may determine whether or not it is going to produce enough revenue to cover maintenance and upkeep. Non-profit cemetery boards must be actively engaged in administrative activity, and “selling” the institution to the community.

Members of the Committee asked about the burial/cremation percentage. Ms. Truhowsky suggested that the New England area was less apt to favor cremation than, for example, California. Recent trends were discussed.

Densities for cemeteries (burials per acre) was discussed.

HOW DO YOU FINANCE IT?

The question of how to finance a cemetery came next. As a cemetery gets filled up, there is less income for maintenance. Many cemeteries fall into disrepair. The suggestion was made by Ms. Reichhelm that Weston might want 4 acres rather than 2 acre, minimum. A Strategic Development Plan would assist in building a budget.

Rule of thumb - \$50,000 per acre for actual development of a cemetery. A discussion of fees for the services required to run a cemetery came next. Willowbrook did a study that cost more than \$10-15,000 (included were items not applicable to Weston) for their 35 acres (25 “usable”).

The role of the Health District was discussed, as well as Connecticut General Statutes pertaining to cemeteries.

The guests were thanked by the Committee for their most informative presentation.

The minutes of March 9 were approved (Hume, Wolf). Meeting adjourned at 9:26pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Wirtenberg, Acting Sec’y

