

**Cemetery Commission
PUBLIC HEARING
For Public Input in Effort to Update Cemetery Rules and Regulations
December 7, 2009
Hooksett Public Library, 7pm**

Present:

Cemetery Trustees: Sharron Champagne/Chair, Mike Horne, Tina Paquette

Public: Arnold A green, Mary Jane Green, Kathie Northrup, Janyce Demers, Kirk Demers, Hubert Topliff, Dale Hemeon, Jodi Pinard (not on sign-in sheet).

Sharron Champagne welcomed everyone and explained that the meeting was the first of the process to update the Hooksett Cemetery Rules and Regulations. The Town Council had been given an update on cemeteries October 28, 2009 and told one of the cemetery commission's goals for Town fiscal year 2010 was review and update cemetery regulations.

One item in the current cemetery regulations is para 3) (A) that states "All monuments are to be flush with the ground." The commission has heard from a number of town residents desires to change this to allow upright monuments.

Mr. Arnold Green spoke: He has experience in Hooksett going back to 1962 when he started a business in Town and served in many positions in the Town. Living on Pleasant St., he has looked at Heads Cemetery since then. He is aware of plaques vs. monuments. He likes history and Hooksett has a lot of history. Somehow over time, perhaps to save money, the regulation was changed to allow only flat monuments. He never got a clear explanation from anyone, never asked Wally Emerson (cemetery commission chair for many years). Arnold said he bought four cemetery lots in Heads, his brother is buried there. His boss is also buried there. The history of Hooksett is in the cemeteries. Walking around the cemetery one can see people who developed the Town. Perhaps with flush monuments in the new section it is easier to mow. Memories come back when reading upright monuments which have more room for personal messages. He recommended changing the regulation to allow him and others to have upright monuments.

Dale Hemeon spoke: He didn't know where the decision for flush monuments came from. He listed off previous names of people who maintained the cemeteries or were on the commission (Hector, Bernie Gould, Vincent – ones during Wally Emerson's time on the commission?). Dale said the maintenance problems come from people planting bushes and trees at the graves that require extra maintenance. He said upright monuments would require some extra time in maintaining the grounds (mowing, trimming) but he would support what the people want.

Kathie Northrup spoke: She agrees with and supports what Arnold Green said. Plus there are so many headstones and monuments that are broken and in dire need of maintenance. She said without upright monuments that allow more words and such, what will people in 50 years know about those now being buried. She would agree with a regulation change to permit upright monuments.

Sharron Champagne asked for suggested heights and sizes of monuments, if maximum dimensions were needed to be defined.

Dale Hemeon said the installation of monuments needs to be supervised. There have been lots of problems of unsupervised monument installations.

Someone asked about family lots – why did the cemetery commission stop selling them. None of the cemetery trustees or attendees knew the answer.

Janyce Demers said she know about regulation #6 (requirement for removing real and artificial flowers from burial lots within 14 days after placement).

Mr. Green said he bought 4 lots and heard it was a family lot.

Kathie Northrup asked about cemetery funding, specifically perpetual care funding. Tina Paquette said the \$300 lot fee check is written to the Town of Hooksett and deposited. Every year the interest in that account can be withdrawn and used for maintenance. Kathie asked a follow-up questions: where do funds come from for doing more maintenance than the seasonal cutting of grass. No answer was given by the cemetery trustees.

Mr. Green suggested returning to having the maintenance performed by the cemetery commission.

Dale Hemeon spoke of the responsibility of marking graves and how funeral homes are getting more demanding. Families who own the lots own the responsibility for marking the grave.

Jodi Pinard said the fee for full burial (opening/closing) weekdays is \$300, cremation \$100, more on weekends.

Mr. Green encouraged attendees to go see the Goffstown cemeteries. There are many special monuments there. He asked if he could have a copy of the plans of Heads cemetery. He was told yes.

Kathie Northrup asked about maintenance projects planned or underway in the cemeteries. She also asked if the trustees know about the cemetery on Hall Mountain.

Dale Hemeon spoke about the cemetery by Judge Gate's home.

Kirk Demers said the maintenance of the cemeteries was very good. Dale said it's difficult to keep up. It takes his crew 8 days to make the cycle of getting around to all the areas they have to maintain. There was a part-time employee during the past growing season who helped keep up.

Janyce Demers asked if Martin's cemetery was the only one with a water supply and Dale said "yes, that the installation had been installed by a donation. Mr. Green said something about Goffstown cemeteries, that they have water containers with water available.

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Kathie Northrup said she would rather see paying a little more each year for doing maintenance needs vs. doing poor annual maintenance and having larger costs required in 10-20 years.

Janyce Demers said people who visit cemeteries leave special items at graves which make people like her feel good and she doesn't feel they should be removed.

The meeting ended at 8PM when the library was to close.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Horne
For the Recording Secretary