



KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL  
MAYOR

CITY OF SALEM  
MASSACHUSETTS  
CEMETERY COMMISSION

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BETH GERARD, CHAIR

**BOARD MEMBERS**  
PATRICIA DONAHUE  
ANTHONY O'DONNELL  
JEN RATLIFF

**MINUTES OF THE CEMETERY COMMISSION**  
**July 21, 2021**

A meeting of the Salem Cemetery Commission was held on July 21, 2021 at 6:00 p.m., via ZOOM, an online video conference call system. Present on call were: Chair Beth Gerard, Members: Jen Ratliff and Anthony O'Donnell and Commission Clerk Joanne Roomey. Absent were Patricia Donahue and Cemetery Superintendent Robert LeBlanc.

**1. Approve Cemetery Commission Site Visit Meeting Minutes for April 28, 2021, and approve Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes for May 19, 2021**

Ms. Ratliff made a motion to approve the Cemetery Commission Site Visit Meeting Minutes for April 28, 2021, and Meeting Minutes for May 19, 2021. Seconded by Mr. O'Donnell. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

**2. Cemetery Work Report**

Ray Jodoin, DPW Operations Manager, was on the call and presented Mr. LeBlanc's cemetery report.

- Interment Activities within the cemetery for the past two month are:

(20) Cremation burials  
(9) Full burials

- The Memorial Day event at the Broad St. Cemetery was a very nice event. The dedication at the tomb of General Fredrick W. Lander was the focus of the day. The Civil War re-enactors took part, as well as small contingent of marines to carry the flags and present the salute. The Salem High School band played the star-spangled banner, taps and other patriotic tunes. The Mayor and several dignitaries spoke, and the crowd numbered at about 100 people.

- Greenlawn Cemetery was in good order for Memorial Day, with over 900 flowers planted at entranceways, statues, and dedicated locations throughout the grounds. The two staircases at the Civil War memorial received a fresh coat of white paint and the flags were lowered to half-staff.
- Through the month of June, the cemetery staff worked diligently to keep up with the flush of spring growth. Due to staffing issues this was a challenge.
- On June 4th, the contractor who performs the aquatic management of the ponds came to the Greenlawn Cemetery, along with our electrical contractors to work on installing the two new fountains in the ponds. At the end of the day, they were able to get one fountain working, but the fountain in the small pond had mechanical problems. Two weeks later the second fountain was not operating properly and was shut off. The contractor was called, and the work is still ongoing. Superintendent LeBlanc will update the Board as soon as he has more information on the needed repairs for the fountains.
- The paving was started and completed on June 15th. The weather and a couple of scheduled burials delayed the work, but the asphalt paving of the first section of the cemetery has been done. The loam and seed to back-up the edge of the pavement is scheduled for August and then everything will be hydro seeded.
- On June 23rd, the Master Plan, headed by Martha Lyon got back to work and a meeting was held at the Community Life Center, where details of the grounds and infrastructure surveys were discussed. The meeting lasted for almost two hours, and it was a good exchange of ideas and options for the future of Greenlawn.
- On June 30th, a ribbon cutting was performed at the Charter St. Cemetery, to officially open the gates and the new Welcome Center to the public. The Mayor had high praise for all the people who worked on the site and the improvements are obvious as the grounds have never looked better. The observations of the new layout of the paths and the improved control of having staffing at the site has been an enormous benefit for the cemetery. The pathways are holding out nicely, the plantings are flourishing, and the grass areas are in much better condition.
- The side doors at the Dickson Chapel are now back in place. The doors were rebuilt by a group of wood craftsman that specialize in historic renovations. The new doors were hung on sturdy hinges and given a fresh coat of Essex Green paint. The two top widows that are on either

side of the doors were re-painted by DPS staff in the same matching color and the whole ensemble looks nice.

- On June 29th, the cemetery staff was increased by one more person, who replaces the position lost to a resignation in January. Mr. Talon Brodeur was brought on as a laborer and is doing a fine job. Additionally, there was one employee who had been out with a medical condition since March, and he has also returned to work. The staffing situation is moving in the right direction, and a good amount of work is anticipated to be accomplished this summer.
- New signs have been ordered to help with the problem of fishing in Sargent's Pond and as soon as they arrive the new signs will be installed.

**3. Greenlawn Park Bench Donation- Mr. Lawrence Blanchard**

Lawrence Blanchard was on the call. He and his sister Pam St. Pierre donated a park bench in memory of their sister Gail Blanchard. It will be located at Sargent Pond in Greenlawn Cemetery or in the vicinity of Lot L0503, Petunia Path. The Board thanked Mr. Blanchard and was very appreciative of the donation.

**4. Howard Street Cemetery - African American Headstones Assessment Report: Rachel Meyer from Salem United**

Rachel Meyer was on the call and showed a sketch of Samuel Payne's, Prince Farmer's, and Venus Chew's (she is the sister of the inventor of the Joe Frogger Cookies) gravestones which they plan on restoring/repairing instead of replacing. The three stones belonging to African Americans were thought to be in a section set aside by the city for the Howard Street Church that once stood nearby. The stones date to the 1850s when Howard Street Cemetery itself was established in 1801. Ms. Meyer wants to start the process the first week of September and believes it will be done by the end of the month.

Ms. Meyer is very passionate about this project and will be funding it. She hopes that the city will maintain the stones and possibly do some plantings.

**5. Charter St. Cemetery – Operation & Grounds update - Vote**

Elizabeth Peterson was on the call and said everything has been operating smoothly. Everyone is cooperative and friendly and only spending about 10 to 15 minutes at a time there. She suggested to expand the capacity from 75 people to 100 people. She said the tour groups have only been 4 to 5 people.

Ms. Ratliff made a motion to update the occupancy limit from 75 people to 100 people and to keep each tour group the same to 15 people. Mr. O'Donnell seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

**6. Greenlawn Master Plan Updates: Martha Lyon**

Martha Lyon was on the call and spoke about the Master Plan that she presented on June 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Community Life Center, where details of the grounds and infrastructure surveys were discussed. It was a good exchange of ideas and options for the future of Greenlawn. The following issues were discussed with the commission:

- Running out of interment space
- More accessibility for the steep slopes
- Closing roads and having cremation gardens
- Only have certain entrances and exits
- Landscape/tree assessment
- Keep the cast iron signs and have them conform to MUTCD standards

Ms. Lyon's suggested that Greenlawn should develop a brand for itself, something that can be marketed to the public, maybe get a graphic designer. Ms. Lyon's will further develop the Master Plan and then finalize it. She will keep the commission posted with a time frame.

**7. Friends of Greenlawn Dickson Chapel use Request- Vote**

Ms. Lutts was on the call and wants to be able to continue to restore and preserve the Dickson Chapel by fund raising. She would like to do a walkathon, walk for windows or stroll for stained glass. She will work with the superintendent for accommodations to open the Dickson Chapel.

Ms. Ratliff made a motion to approve the superintendent of Greenlawn Cemetery to make reasonable accommodations to open and staff the Dickson Chapel as needed for Friends of Greenlawn until November 1, 2021. Mr. O'Donnell seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

**8. New Business: None**

9. **Adjournment:** Ms. Ratliff made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. O'Donnell. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne M. Roomey  
Commission Clerk

**Know your rights under the Open Meeting Law M.G.L. c. 30A §18-25 and  
City Ordinance Sections 2-2028 through 2-2033**