



KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL  
MAYOR

CITY OF SALEM  
MASSACHUSETTS  
CEMETERY COMMISSION

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BETH GERARD, CHAIR

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PATRICIA DONAHUE  
ANTHONY O'DONNELL  
JEN RATLIFF

**MINUTES OF THE CEMETERY COMMISSION  
NOVEMBER 10, 2021**

A meeting of the Salem Cemetery Commission was held on November 10, 2021 at 6:00 p.m., via ZOOM, an online video conference call system. Present on call were: Chair Beth Gerard, Members: Patricia Donahue, Anthony O'Donnell and Jen Ratliff; Cemetery Superintendent Robert LeBlanc and Commission Clerk Joanne Roomey.

**1. Approve Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes for October 20, 2021**

Ms. Ratliff made a motion to approve the Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes for October 20, 2021. Seconded by Ms. Donahue. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

**2. Cemetery Work Report**

Interment Activities within the cemetery for the past month are:

- (4) Cremation burials
- (2) Full burials

Charter Street Cemetery:

- On October 23<sup>rd</sup> the Friends of Greenlawn sponsored a fund-raising event at the cemetery, titled "For the Love of Trees". The event included viewing of the Dickson Memorial Chapel and guide tree walks. The weather was excellent, and the event was well attended.
- On October 27<sup>th</sup> the City of Salem experienced a bomb cyclone wind event that lasted for over 24 hours. Once the storm had passed the damage to the trees was evaluated and the Greenlawn Cemetery had several large limbs broken. No headstones or monuments were impacted, and the debris clean-up lasted for more than a week. At the Howard St. Cemetery, two trees were broken at the base and no head stone damage was noted. This work at the Howard St. Cemetery is on-going as the following Monday the road was slated for grinding and

paving. This debris will be cleaned up as soon as equipment can get down Howard St. At the Broad St. Cemetery, just one branch fell from an oak tree and landed in the back yard of a house on Mt. Vernon St., no damage was reported.

- The Essex St. Cemetery, “Friends” Cemetery, had some visitors on October 30th. The gates were opened so relatives of those buried there could visit, and the gates were secured later that day.
- On Halloween night there was a full crew on duty for the events in the downtown area and Mr. LeBlanc personally secured the main gate at sunset. After making several rounds of the premises and encountering a couple of different groups in the Greenlawn Cemetery, he decided that the best judgement for the night would be to fully secure all gates for the night. He used a plastic zip tie and closed the three pedestrian gates around 7:00 p.m., well after dark. Mr. LeBlanc planned on re-opening the gates in the morning when he arrived at work, usually around 6:00 a.m. Instead, as the staff finally finished up work at 1:30 a.m., he decided to open the gates then and save the ride around in the morning. To his surprise, two out of the three zip ties had already been cut.
- The improvements to the grounds at Greenlawn Cemetery are continuing and two bench pads will be poured on November 15, 2021. The benches are already assembled and ready to be mounted. The two locations will be facing Sargent Pond and will be a very nice addition. One more bench is in the planning stage, and Mr. LeBlanc will notify the commission once the donation is made for this next bench.
- The two new pond fountains will be removed and stored for the winter at the end of the month.
- The position of Truck Driver, that had been vacant since March has been filled. Mr. John Robinson will join the cemetery staff, he has spent the past two years in the street department and will bring much needed expertise to the crew for asphalt repair work and heavy equipment operations.
- In the month of October there have been several Botany classes from SSU that met at Greenlawn Cemetery and the F. Carroll Sargent Arboretum. The classes usually last for a couple of hours and the students look to be busy collecting samples and working on assignments from Dr. Lisa Delissio.
- Presently, the cemetery staff is preparing to start with leaf clean-up, cemetery wide and have hauled out some of the spoils from the compost area at the back of Greenlawn to make room for the leaves. This will occupy most of the work schedule for the rest of the season, until the snow falls.

**3. Dave Knowlton- Salem DPS, Greenlawn Sewer Tie-In update**

Mr. Knowlton spoke about the sewer back-up issues and composting toilets compared to grinder pump or incinerating toilets. He will work with Dave Greenbaum from the BOH in the spring, but for now it will be pumped out as needed.

Mr. Knowlton also spoke about DPS facility upgrades and possible relocation.

**4. Luminaria Event at Greenlawn - Chapel Use Request**

Ryan Macione asked to use the chapel on December 4, 2021 from 6:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. He already got permission from the Fire Department and will come earlier that day to decorate the neighborhood. Mr. LeBlanc explained to him that the chapel has a 45-person limit and Mr. Macione said they will not exceed that. There is no food or drink allowed inside the chapel and they were to follow all safety protocols determined by the BOH. Councilor Riccardi spoke with Dave Greenbaum from the BOH and there are no concerns regarding the event or gathering for wearing masks. Rain date will be on December 5, 2021 or December 12, 2021.

Ms. Ratliff made a motion to approve the gathering at the Greenlawn Chapel for the Luminaria Event on December 4, 2021 from 6:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. with a rain date on December 5, 2021 or December 12, 2021. Seconded by Ms. Donahue. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

**5. Rachel Meyer, Epoch Preservation, Howard St. Cemetery Headstone update and Report**

Ms. Meyer showed the commission before and after photos of the three African American headstones: Samuel Payne's, Prince Farmer's and Venus Chew's. They were placed upright and not flat on the ground and were sprayed with a solution for restoration. Ms. Meyer found another grave site of Patience Jointer who did not have a headstone from October 15, 1851 and would consider a marker for her. She plans on planting some small bushes around the headstones to avoid mowing or future damage. Ms. Meyer suggested maintaining/spraying the stones every couple of years.

The commission was very thankful and appreciative for all the work Ms. Meyer had done. Ms. Meyer and Patti Kelleher will look into an application for a grant that would help the preservation of these headstones.

**6. Elizabeth Peterson- Charter St. Cemetery, October review/report**

Ms. Peterson was amazed from the turnout of over 60,000 people that came through the cemetery. They brought in approximately \$25,000 to \$28,000. The biggest challenge was being short staffed. She did have four students from SSU that took great pride in assisting the visitors. She would like to have better signage, focus more on accessibility, and limit the number of strollers that came through the cemetery. Ms. Peterson wants to drop the visitors' time down to 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. by November 16, 2021.

**7. Adjournment:** Ms. Ratliff made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Ms. Donahue. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:35 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**