

Village of Bellaire

CEMETERY COMMITTEE

Helen Schuckel, Chairperson

Terry Smith (Forest Home Twp.)

David Schulz (Village Council)

COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

August 31, 2018

8:00 a.m.

1. Call to Order: Chairperson Schuckel called the meeting to order at 8:17 a.m.

2. Roll Call Attendance

Present: Chairperson Schuckel, President Schulz and Supervisor Smith

Absent: None.

Staff Present: Lori Lockett, Clerk; Ken Stead, DPW Director; Steve Alger, Cemetery Maintenance

Also Present: Jean Seman, Bob Schoof, Meri Schoof, Bonnie Richards, Gary Mortensen, Gavin Mortensen, Mary Ann Waara, Don Waara, Betty W. Hoover, and Rosalie Jean Smith Pippin

3. Approval of Agenda: The agenda was approved with the addition of “Friends of Veterans” as item “b” under new business.

Motion by President Schulz, seconded by Supervisor Smith, to approve the agenda as amended. Motion carried by voice vote.

4. Approval of the July 18, 2018 Meeting Minutes: The minutes were approved as presented.

Motion by President Schulz, seconded by Supervisor Smith, to approve the minutes of July 18, 2018 as presented. Motion carried by voice vote.

5. Public Comment on Agenda Items: Mr. Shoof renewed his request for permission to plant flowers on the west side of the family name stone. He noted that his mother has been planting flowers there for 18 years. He is willing to remove the urn to accommodate the lawn mowing. Jean Seman requested that an additional trash receptacle be placed at the cemetery. Betty Hoover noted that she has volunteered to do an inventory of the monuments in the cemetery. The monuments are facing north, south, east, and west. There cannot be a blanket statement that the monuments are to be facing east. If the requirement is enforced retroactively, it will cause a lot of hurt. It is not possible to know if the monuments are placed at the head for foot of each gravesite. She stated that she has a relative buried in the cemetery who is not indicated on the map.

6. Old Business

a) Cemetery Rules and Regulations: President Schulz expressed his understanding that the purpose of this meeting was for the subcommittee to begin the process of reviewing the cemetery rules and regulations. Council had approved the working committee to review the rules, not to enforce as the agenda item indicates. Clerk Lockett explained that the agenda item had been repeated from the previous meeting, for future meetings she will delete “enforcement”. Mr. Mortensen thought the rules meeting would be a long coffee meeting. President Schulz explained that the committee meeting had to comply with the Open Meetings Act to which the public is invited. Clerk Lockett requested clarification; there has been no inference that the committee intended to require that monuments be moved. President Schulz suggested that an assumption was being made based on the recent enforcement of the rules. From a customer viewpoint how far was enforcement of the rules going to go. Several suggestions have come out of discussions such as placement of the rules at the cemetery, hoses, and the request for trash receptacles. The suggestion was to post the rules at the water spigots. Clerk Lockett noted that copies had been made and laminated to do that. President Schulz asked members of the public to provide names of other well-maintained cemeteries so that the rules can be solicited. Questions to ask are how do the cemeteries deal with changing rules if those interred have been so over 100 years? How do they communicate the change in rules? President Schulz suggested that historically things have been done in compliance; the current rules address new interments. He cited the recent clarification for vegetation to include bushes, shrubs, and trees. He asked how DPW Director Stead interpreted the change if there are

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items twenty plus years old. Director Stead indicated that only cut the dead items. Clerk Luckett explained how an issue with overgrown plantings had been resolved. She hoped that these issues could be resolved. Betty Hoover noted that she has relatives from out of town who visit the cemetery on the weekend, the rules needed to be visible. Gary Mortensen suggested that the rules could be on the maintenance building. Mrs. Hoover expressed concern about the historical significance of gravesites that are not in compliance but need to be maintained. She would like to contact family members. Mr. Shoof did not think that clarifying the rules would help in his situation. There is not a definition of "head stone" and no direction to indicate flowers must be on the east. Chairperson Schuckel explained her interpretation of the rules. Steve Alger said that the stones are facing all directions. You cannot determine the planting area by which way the stone is facing, you have to by the burial vault and then there is 18" beyond the headstone. Mrs. Hoover added that not everyone knows the direction in the cemetery and that north is at the top of the hill. Gary Mortensen explained that the graves in the older section of the cemetery were laid out in a fan shape. Cemeteries laid out in straight lines, north-south and east-west are easier to organize. Determining where graves are on the hill is tough. Supervisor Smith stated that he did not see anything wrong with the diagram and did not know that adding a north point would accomplish anything. The drawing indicates that on graves that are headstones, the plantings are to be down towards the feet. Wherever the headstone is, it goes to the vault side of the headstone. President Schulz said that for Mr. Shoof's plot the common area is behind. There was discussion about whether the stone was a headstone or footstone. Gary Mortensen added that the heads of the grave are north or west; that is how they bury people. Mr. Shoof stated that his mother has assumed that the big name stone was the headstone. The marker with his father's name may not be flush but was placed a good quarter of a century ago with full approval of all parties involved at the time. There are stones all over the place with flowers planted. His mother feels this action is being taken against them personally. The flowers have been planted in the same location for 18 years. Does Section 29-8.B. apply? Mr. Shoof noted that there are stones in the cemetery, in different directions, with flowers planted around them. Steve Alger stated that 80% of the gravesites are in compliance. The other 20% fall in categories of people not knowing, understanding, or caring about the rules; or that the rules do not apply. President Schulz added that the rules have changed. President Schulz suggested that some of the things were done in compliance with the "ordinance" at the time. Extending the concept to ordinance, President Schulz suggested it was akin to the lawful nonconforming signs at his business. If the village is going to be consistent in how it enforces ordinances, we have to look at the rules that were in place at the time of each burial. Why should they be punished now? Using the zoning analogy Clerk Luckett suggested that perennials were akin to a permanent structure; annuals do not come back so the planting of annuals should be done in compliance with the rules. It seems that the most of the recent issues are with the planting of annuals. If annuals can be planted in compliance, they should be. Maybe a solution is that annuals are only planted in an urn. From a maintenance standpoint, Steve Alger thought that planting flowers in flower pots would be easier. If looking for a common way to do things it would be the best way to go. Rosalie Jean Smith Pippin said she has visited the cemetery since 1988 and until recently was not aware that there were rules. A large concrete urn selected by her grandfather, has been in front of her grandfather's grave for many years. The urn was removed and placed behind the maintenance garage. Her husband was able to identify the urn and it was replaced on the grave site. The urn has again been removed. She cannot physically move the urn and would like to have it returned. If she is required to put it on the east side, it will be hidden by the stone. She believes there is a communication problem. Meri Shoof asked about their urn that had been removed. She agreed the problem has been one of communication. President Schulz referred to the minutes of the committee meeting on July 18. The purpose is to have a working session to review the cemetery rules and make a recommendation on whether there should be any changes. Some things can be done, i.e. another trash receptacle. Gary Mortensen suggested that the committee could respond to the questions raised. Supervisor Smith stated that there were three matters. First, Shoof's removal of the urn. Second, Shoof's planting of flowers in the original location. President Schulz indicated that if the urn were removed, there would be room for the mower to get through. Supervisor Smith made the motion to recommend to village council that the Shoof's be allowed to move the flowers to the original location and that they remove the urn. President Schulz requested an amendment that it be pending finalization of new cemetery rules and regulations. This is a temporary fix until regulations are final. There was brief discussion and clarification about the use of the word "pending". President Schulz supported the motion.

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Motion by Supervisor, seconded by President Schulz, to recommend to village council that pending finalization of new cemetery rules and regulations, the Shoofs will be allowed to move the flowers to the original location and they will remove the urn. Motion carried by voice vote.

Mr. Shoof asked whether it could be done today. Committee members indicated yes. The third question was the placement of the Smith urn removed for lack of plantings. The urn was in front of the monument. DPW staff wanted it moved over the vault. The flower pot was on the west, over another grave or path. Steve Alger explained that the urn had been picked up as an unused pot after Memorial Day and placed beside the grave. Mrs. Pippin said that it had been there over 100 years or at least since 1965. Mr. Alger explained that, at the direction of the Cemetery Sexton, unused pots were picked up after Memorial Day. It was picked up a second time because he was never told that it could stay at the grave site. It was removed because it was unused and on the wrong side. Supervisor Smith clarified that the urn could be returned if it was planted. Mrs. Pippin asked why one would put an urn behind a 7' headstone. How does it honor my grandparents? There was discussion about the placement of monument. Mr. Mortensen explained that gravestones were set out in different ways. There have been different boards that have made different rules on the placement and direction of the headstones. He encouraged people to use common sense. According to Mr. Mortensen, burials do not have the significance they used to have; many today are choosing not to be buried. President Schulz acknowledged how emotional this can be. It is important that the Cemetery Sexton contact families after interment to explain the rules about plantings and their location. There has to be common sense and communication. The sooner this is done the better. President Schulz suggested that there be a guideline or a template. President Schulz acknowledged that the meeting on the 18th revealed the 20 hours allotted per week for cemetery maintenance is not enough. If there is more time allotted, will there be more flexibility? The discussion returned to the placement of the Smith urn. Supervisor Smith suggested that for the urn be placed on the gravesite for the remainder of the year, until the rules are changed.

Motion by Supervisor, seconded by President Schulz, to recommend to village council that the Smith urn will be allowed placed on the original location for the remainder of this year until the changing of the rules. Motion carried by voice vote.

Mrs. Pippin asked when the urn could be moved, as she is not able to. Steve Alger indicated that it would be returned on Tuesday.

7. New Business

a) **Flag Policy**– Supervisor Smith explained that he had received a complaint from a Forest Home Township constituent about the size of a flag on an adjoining grave site. It was on a flag pole and leaning over. He suggested that there be a discussion about the size of flags. Clerk Luckett added that there had also been a discussion about illumination of flags left on site. She explained that she had contacted the American Legion National Headquarters and had been told that there is no minimum size for illumination. Additionally, flags must be disposed of properly. The spokesperson said that there is deference to cemetery policies and procedures. Steve Alger reported that flags are left out all year long. President Schulz noted that there is no reference to flags in the village code; the committee will need to address this. Mrs. Smith had a question about flag placement mentioning that her son and relatives are buried in the cemetery. The flag on her son's grave was behind the stone. If placed in front it blocks identifying information. Steve Alger had also contacted the American Legion, flags are supposed to be in the middle, over the vault, or in the case of a shared stone, in the middle of the veteran's grave. According to Gary Mortensen, the bronze markers have been moved to the headstones. The bronze markers can be the headstone. President Schulz noted that flag placement should also be addressed in the rules. Steve Alger reported that the flags are where they should be according to the American Legion. Gary Mortensen asked about the placement of flags at Arlington Cemetery. Are the flags over the vault? Gary Mortensen asked what the big deal is if the flag is to the side. Steve Alger noted that there are rules to be followed. Mrs. Shoof spoke of her website that had veteran's grave pictures. The flags are next to the stones. The problem with flags in the middle means the stone is obstructed.

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b) **Friends of the Veterans** – Friends of the Veterans has requested permission to place 12 to 18, 3x5 American flags on poles at two village locations on Memorial Day, Flag Day, 4th of July, and Veterans' Day. Flags will be put up in the morning and removed at the end of the day. The location in the cemetery is where the fence was removed. The flag with dog tags was identified. Tom Waara, co-founder of the Friends, said that this is a trial; the number of flags is dependent on the number of sponsors. Steve Alger suggested that the DPW could install permanent flag holders in the ground. Mr. Waara reported that there are fewer and fewer veterans. The group is trying to find other volunteer sources to keep the patriotism and the flag foremost on these occasions. Supervisor Smith made the motion to recommend that the Friends of the Veterans request be granted as to Lakeview Cemetery.

Motion by Supervisor Smith, seconded by President Schulz, to recommend to village council that the Friends of the Veterans request be granted for placement of flags in Lakeview Cemetery. Motion carried by voice vote.

The location of the flags will be worked out with the DPW and Cemetery Sexton. Mr. Waara expressed the Friend's wish to have flags throughout the community.

8. Discussion Items: None presented.

9. Communications/Informational: None presented.

10. Member/Public Comment: No member comment. Bonnie Richards asked as they proceed with the rules the grandfathering issue with the stones and plantings be clarified. Mrs. Pippin suggested that most do not know the lot number. Is Section 29-7E. pertinent? President Schulz stated that the section is pertinent when the plot is purchased not necessarily when flowers are planted. Mrs. Pippin also identified the notice requirement specified in Section 29-7 I.

11. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 9:48 a.m.

Compiled by Lori Luckett, Clerk
Minutes are subject to approval

Approved: _____
Helen Schuckel, Chairperson

Date: _____