Cemetery Committee

April 28, 2021

12:00 pm
Municipal Office Complex – Room 1
And recorded via Youtube

Deb Denette, Crary Brownell and Rob Smith were in attendance:

Mr. Smith called the meeting to order.

Mrs. Denette inquired why the Selectman's agenda no longer carried the Cemetery committee as an agenda item. Mr. Smith responded that it can be restored. He stated that it was removed as no activity would be occurring due to COVID.

Mrs. Denette inquired if the draft ordinance had been sent to the Town Attorney for review. Mr. Smith advised that it had not. He added that there are several ordinance items that can now move forward as COVID restrictions are lessening.

Mr. Brownell noted that town business continued to be conducted, he inquired why this was held. Mr. Smith responded that no gatherings or town meetings were occurring. Mrs. Denette stated that the document could have been sent through the Town Attorney review process. Mr. Smith concurred.

Mrs. Denette noted that the Cemetery Committee has been asking for a financial accounting of all funds held for the benefit of the Cemeteries for two and a half years. She inquired of that status. Mr. Smith responded that it will be provided. Mr. Brownell inquired what has changed that will now allow us access to this information. Mr. Smith advised that nothing has changed.

Mrs. Denette noted that as the person that picks up the mail, she opened mail addressed East Haddam Cemetery Non-Expendable Fund and East Haddam Cemetery Maintenance. (She added that she was reprimanded for doing so). The approximate value of the accounts noted was $88,000. She added that she has a memorandum from the Treasurer that says at present time (2019) we have $10,008.80 in the cd. Mrs. Denette inquired if certificate of deposits are maintained for other town funds besides the cemeteries. Mr. Smith stated that he assumed so. Mrs. Denette stated that she would like to see that accounting as well as the total amount reported in invested funds from the 2020 annual report is $105,000 and cemetery funds appear to equal $98,000 of that. She raised concern that full disclosure has not occurred.

A review of the draft ordinance was undertaken. The purpose, membership and terms, maintenance of fund, donations and perpetual funds and management of funds were all acceptable to the First Selectman. There was also concurrence that memorandum of understanding or contracts should be in place for the management of each cemetery. Regarding appointment of a sexton there was agreement that appointment of the Facilities Manager to this role seemed appropriate.

Responsive to inquiry from Mr. Smith, Mr. Brownell advised that proposals for the layout of future burial grounds have been created, but will not move forward until there is a committee to present it. Concerns with the condition of Warner Cemetery were relayed. The need for survey's was also discussed. Additional discussion was held on the need for contracts or memorandum of understanding particularly on privately owned properties that are maintained by the town. Mr. Brownell noted frustration with the lack of documentation regarding what cemetery plots were originally issued and remain unused.

In summary, the First Selectman stated that he would assure that a financial accounting of cemetery funds is provided to the Committee and that he would have the ordinance forwarded to the Town Attorney for review.

Mr. Smith acknowledged that the Cemetery Committee remains in a hurry up and wait mode.

The meeting ended at 12:33.

Yet the Financial Statements as of June 30, 2020 lists the total amount of certificates of deposit for the town to be $105,281. Mrs. Denette raised concern that full disclosure

For the benefit of Mrs. Quinn, Mr. Brownell and Mrs. Denette reviewed the history of the Committee and the challenges that it faces due to the lack of a formal charge. The various attempts offered by the Committee over the past several years to establish such charge was also reviewed. Mrs. Quinn concurred with the recommendations of the Committee.

The draft ordinance (which establishes a charge) prepared by the Committee was reviewed. No changes were recommended. Mr. Brownell questioned whether it was more appropriate for the town's attorney or the town's land use attorney to provide a final review. It was determined that the draft be sent to the Board of selectmen to make sure that the Board concurs with ordinance prior to moving it forward.

Mrs. Denette agreed to draft the memorandum to the Board of Selectmen.

The Committee adjourned at 5:45 pm.