

## CEMETERY TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT 2015

In 1994, the New Hampshire Legislature changed the Cemetery Laws, requiring each municipality to “provide one or more suitable cemeteries for the interment of deceased persons within its boundaries” and giving the sole authority for the care and maintenance of municipal cemeteries to Cemetery Trustees. Eleven years later, at the 2005 Town Meeting we voted to “delegate the duties and responsibilities of the cemetery trustees” to the selectmen. With the help of an elected superintendent of cemeteries, the selectmen served as cemetery trustees until the 2014 Town Meeting, when the Town Meeting voted to elect a five person board of Cemetery Trustees. The elected position of superintendent of cemeteries, then being an optional elected position inconsistent with statute, was changed to an appointed position of Sexton, reporting to the Cemetery Trustees.

In accordance with the 2014 town vote and state law, two cemetery trustees, Ted Michalek and Dick Snow, were appointed early in 2015 and three additional members, Holly Haas, Carlton Robie and Mark Siemonsma, were elected at the 2015 Town meeting. Unfortunately, later in the year, we lost the services of both Ted and Mark because Ted had to resign when his family moved to Florida and Mark had to resign when his work commitments changed and he was out of town for long periods of time. We were however, fortunate to be able to recruit two excellent replacements, Tom DiMaggio and Mike Pouliot, to serve until the March elections.

Having seven different individuals during the year who could dedicate some of their time and efforts to the cemeteries from March thru December allowed us to move forward with a number of the organizational tasks necessary to effectively and efficiently manage the business of running the care and maintenance of our municipal cemeteries. We managed to review and approve the Bylaws for our Cemetery Trustees. We then reviewed a number of cemetery rules and regulations from other towns. Using the most appropriate parts of each of them we developed a set of **Operational Rules and Regulations** for how we'd manage the cemeteries. Secondly, we developed **Cemetery Usage Rules and Regulations** to be used by Cemetery lot owners and the general public. We discussed them with the selectmen, held a public hearing in July, reviewed the documents and approved them at our July 16th meeting. This being the first time in 250 years that there have been written rules and regulations for our cemeteries, it should be understood that they are to be considered a work-in-progress and the trustees welcome input and discussion on them. They are posted on the town website and copies are available in the town office.

Having done that, the trustees reviewed, discussed and debated the development of the **Fee Schedule** appendix to the **Operational Rules and Regulations**. We'd already converted the existing **Perpetual Care Trust Fund Fee** to a **General Cemetery Maintenance Trust Fund Fee**, something that will require the voters approval in March. We also increased, after discussing it with the selectmen, the fees charged for the sale of a **Lot** and the other fees. Those changes became effective January 1, 2016. The trustees are in the process of developing the documentation necessary to effect the regulations. Questions should be directed to the trustees at the Town Office. Every regular meeting of the trustees has a portion of the meeting available for member(s) of the public to formally speak with them, upon written request.

For members of the public attending any regular meeting, there is also a regular agenda item at the end of the meeting for questions or comments.

Helping the trustees care for your cemeteries are two town employees that report to the trustees. Robert Pike does the physical maintenance of the cemeteries and is responsible for keeping them looking good for visitors. It's sometimes a challenging job and his efforts are appreciated by the trustees. Jerry Becker started out the year as the appointed Sexton, but chose to resign in August for personal reasons. The trustees appreciate his effort as both Superintendent and Sexton over the past six years. We wish him good health and happiness in the years to come. The elimination of the optional elected office of Cemetery Superintendent will be a warrant article at the March Town Meeting. The trustees will be developing the documentation necessary to properly classify the duties and responsibilities of the Sexton position in the coming year.