**ATHENS CEMETERY COMMISSION**

**Draft of minutes of April 5, 2023 meeting**

. The meeting was called to order by Donald Capponcelli at 6:01PM. Present were Don, David Bemis, Harold Noyes, Steve Oakes and James Neathawk, commissioners. There were no members of the public present.

. There were no adjustments to the agenda.

. The minutes of the December 7, 2022 meeting were approved without any additions or corrections (David Bemis moved to accept; seconded by Steve Oakes. All 5 commissioners voted to approve).

. Re-organization for 2023 – David Bemis nominated Don Capponcelli for Chairman and Clerk. Seconded by Steve Oakes. Carried to a vote and passed, with all 5 commissioners voting to approve.

**. Financial Update:**

* The year-end balance of $23,632.91 for cemeteries in 2022, appearing in the Cemetery Commission Report on Page 25 of the 2022 Athens Town Report, is overstated by $750.00. The error occurred because there had been an overpayment of $750.00 to Ivor Stevens Grounds Maintenance in 2022. The overpayment was discovered in early December, and Don had been expecting a reimbursement check prior to the end of the year. Instead, a credit of $750.00 will be carried into the 2023 season.
* With the failed Town Budget vote on March 6, 2023, the annual stipend for cemeteries has been reduced from $3,000.00 to $1,250.00. The current stipend is part of a revised Town Budget to be voted on at a special town meeting warned for April 27, 2023.

**. Review of allotments for Major Repairs in 2022** - $1,200.00 had been approved for monument and tablet repairs in each of the 2 cemeteries. None of the funds were expended in 2022. Don asked if the funds need to be re-appropriated for 2023- The consensus was that there was no time limit to expend these funds, so they did not need to be re-appropriated.

**. Investment of cemetery reserves into Certificates of Deposit (CDs)** – Of the current $22,882.91 Town Ledger balance for Cemeteries, $16, 532.08 is accounted for as reserves for Valley Cemetery major maintenance and $1,750.00 is accounted for as reserves for West Cemetery major maintenance. Don points out that if a $14,500.00 investment was taken from the Valley Cemetery major maintenance reserves, and the currently-approved $1,200.00 for major repairs was fully expended, then $832.08 would remain accessible for Valley Cemetery major repairs. Don further shows that if a $500.00 investment from the West Cemetery major maintenance reserves, and the currently-approved $1,200.00 for major repairs was fully expended, then $50.00 would remain accessible for West Cemetery major repairs:

* David Bemis moved that $15,000.00 from reserves for major maintenance be invested into a 12-month CD. Seconded by Harold Noyes. In the discussion that followed, Don pointed out that M&T Bank made an offer on March 13, 2023 of 3.92% on 12-month CDs. Don is asked to get an update from M&T Bank and to shop the Bellows Falls area banks as well as 802 Credit Union for the most favorable rate of return. David’s motion is carried to a vote and passed, with all 5 commissioners voting in favor.

**. Shall there be any changes to the level of grounds maintenance in the cemeteries?** – Of the current $22,882.91 Town Ledger balance for Cemeteries, $1,680.81 in prior year surpluses is accounted for as Operating Budget. An additional credit of $750.00 with Ivor Stevens GM, plus a stipend of $1.250.00 in 2023 from the Town of Athens (if approved by voters) would provide a total $3,680.81 for operating budget in 2023:

* Don points out that the contract with Ivor Stevens GM would remain at the same $3,000.00 if we continue with the same level of grounds maintenance as the past 20 years. Should we reduce mowings? The failed budget vote at the March 6’th Town Meeting may be indicating that voters are thinking Athens is living beyond its means. Harold Noyes thinks maintaining the current level of grounds care is critical for Athens’ image, and contrasted how the relatively poor condition of other cemeteries reflects poorly on a nearby town. The discussion shifts to other possible fundraising outreach to private groups such as the Windham Foundation, the American Legion, Athens Historical Society, the Moose Club and the Elks Club. Could Grafton Cares be approached for a fundraising dinner?
* David Bemis moves to keep the same level of grounds maintenance as in recent years. Seconded by Harold Noyes. Carried to a vote and passed, with all 5 commissioners voting in favor.

**. Progress reports** – There has been no progress on tablet or monument repairs in either cemetery, nor has there been progress on row marker installation in the West Cemetery new section. There has also been no progress with map & records updating.

. There were no public comments.

. Date of next regularly scheduled meeting is Wednesday, June 7, 2023, 6PM, Athens Town Office (unless otherwise warned).

. The meeting was adjourned at 6:27PM (Don Capponcelli moved to adjourn; David Bemis seconding).

Respectfully submitted,

Donald Capponcelli