

Crematory Study Committee

July 6, 2009

Town Offices, Room 307

Members Present:

Jeff Boone

Richard Crowley

Cathleen Case

Steve Desisto

Charlie Ellis

Mary Gosby

Joe Knox

Dick Montiminy

Peter Yapp

Guests Present:

Dave Badger

Deb Williams

- 2.01 Joe Knox called the meeting to order at 7:05pm, handed out agenda and introduced guests from current Cemetery Commission.
- 2.02 Peter Yapp mentioned concerns regarding ethics when serving on a town committee specifically in relation to Jeff Boone's established opinion regarding the development of a crematory in Littleton. It was decided to discuss this later in the meeting when Jeff was present.
- 2.03 Charlie Ellis reminded the committee how important it is to continue to gather information from various experts with different opinions and information so we can make our recommendation to the town as well informed as possible.
- 2.04 Current Cemetery Commissioners Dave Badger and Deb Williams began a joint discussion to review the current status of the building at Westlawn Cemetery. The building was built in 1992 and has plumbing and gas mains that could supply the needs for 2 crematory units. However the building was not designed or built with the structural integrity for the crematory units.
- 2.05 Peter Yapp pointed out that the units have changed considerably since 1992.
- 2.06 Joe Knox stated that David Crispin would be able to answer engineering questions and actually provide a feasibility study for no cost if he has the chance to view the plans of the building. Mr. Crispin works for BSG Group that designed the new Plymouth facility and has worked at Blue Hill Cemetery for 37 years.
- 2.07 Deb Williams reminded the committee that if a crematory were built in our cemetery it would be run by our municipality. She also noted that cemetery commissioners serve at the pleasure of the State Legislature, DEP monitors and limits the number of cremations any one unit can perform in one day.

- 2.08 David Badger presented a plan which was established in 1992 along with a conceptual budget
- 2.09 Deb Williams stated that Finance Committee recommended the Cemetery Commissioners create a Business Plan. The Cemetery Commissioners then went to Selectmen for guidance. The Cemetery must report to the State DEP.
- 2.10 David Badger stated the Finance Committee requested budget for crematory and further stated that that cremations are up to 35-40% of Business, or 65 to 70 cremations. He stated that a Funeral Home in Concord does about 100 per year and within the immediate area there is approx. 1000 per year.
- 2.11 Peter Yapp questioned how many cremations a day can be done in a day by one unit. David Badger replied up to 3 per day but the number is regulated by MA. DEP.
- 2.12 Jeff Boone asked David Badger how crematories relate or work with funeral directors.
- 2.13 David Badger noted that funeral Directors work with crematories like any other business, the crematories that service funeral directors better, get more business.
- 2.14 Deb Williams noted some crematories provide disposable caskets to Funeral Directors. This keeps cost down for the directors and the families.
- 2.15 Deb Williams pointed out that the closest crematoriums to Littleton are located in Worcester, Haverhill, and Cambridge.
- 2.16 David Badger described process once a person dies. He described the paperwork and described process with medical examiner when medical examiner is involved. All paperwork stays with body, Medical Examiners sometimes do final exam at crematory. When the medical examiner is involved, the cremation cannot take place without his inspection. This is done within 48 hours of death.
- 2.17 Peter Yapp asked if there are waivers for 48hours for religious groups. David Badger replied that certain religious groups can get waivers from and through Medical Examiner
- 2.18 Deb Williams stated that current size of the cemetery would enable the town to accommodate our resident for at least the next 100 years.
- 2.19 Dick Montiminy noted in the paperwork handed out tonight indicates that 15,000 cremations are taking place per year and this number is increasing at a rate of 10% per year. This was discussed and Mr. Boone suggested the CANA rates for Massachusetts were an increase of about 4-3% per year, and suggested that the

increase was partially due to easing of restrictions on Catholics, so may not be sustained.

- 2.20 Deb Williams noted that Middlesex County has the highest population in Massachusetts, and the highest number of cremations in Massachusetts. Deb also described how demographics have changed and people are moving away from home and are not preparing themselves as the last generation did by pre purchasing a grave site. This demographic migration lends itself to cremations rather than burial in a family plot.
- 2.21 Joe Knox asked about the report from 2004 regarding the cost for a crematory. Deb responded by noting that if a new crematory were built, there would be a positive cash flow within 5 years. This was in the business plan. This was also reviewed and confirmed with the Town Treasurer at the time.
- 2.22 Charlie Ellis asked for further clarification about the Business plan. Deb stated that employees for a town owned crematorium would come from the present cemetery staff. No new help would be needed. The cemetery would become a multi service cemetery, with single source responsibility, and town owned. The Cemetery Commission would be able to return its borrowed funds back to the Town. Deb stated budget is now at 122K per year of which the town funds approximately half.
- 2.23 Charlie Ellis stated that a crematorium would stop the draw down of 125K from town coffers. Deb noted that the draw is more like 65K since perpetual care contributions contribute about half the cemetery's operating cost.
- 2.24 David Badger concurred that the present staff could operate a crematorium without adding more help.
- 2.25 Deb Williams noted that the Business plan and financials are three years old and would have to be updated.
- 2.26 Peter Yapp noted Hindus, Muslims, Indians require cremations.
- 2.27 Jeff Boone asked how many people from Littleton would use crematory. David Badger answered 10 or more Littleton residents would use a crematorium if one were built in Littleton. David also noted that when a person is cremated the death certificate states the final disposition as the city where cremation takes place. So all people who currently live in Littleton, and die, have either Haverhill, Worcester, or Mount Auburn cemeteries listed on their death certificate that their final place of disposition, not Littleton.
- 2.28 Deb Williams noted that the main reason for considering the existing building for the previously proposed crematorium was the cost. Additionally the conditions of the lot restricts where any building can go.

- 2.29 At 8pm Cemetery Commissioners left.
- 2.30 Jeff Boone gave a written (slide) presentation to the members. He stated that his presentation was not based upon whether it is good or bad idea for Town but rather whether there is a need for a crematorium.
- 2.31 Jeff Boone presented data from a 2007 Mass DEP approval letter for Attleboro Crematory, which contained the emission limits for Nitrous Oxides, Sulfur Dioxides, Carbon Monoxide, Particle Matter, and Volatile Organic Compounds. Mr. Boone noted concerns since he felt Littleton already has significant existing air pollutants from Rt. 495 and the gravel yard in town. Charlie Ellis noted EPA should do air quality testing in town before considering a crematory.
- 2.32 Charlie Ellis asked Peter Yapp if Aggregate does air quality testing and Peter noted that they still do testing.
- 2.33 Peter Yapp wanted Jeff Boone to clarify an item listed on his written (slide) presentation. Peter Yapp wondered if the distance from his house (Jeff Boone's) to the Cemetery Building was to the closest corner of the cemetery building or to the furthest corner where the proposed Crematorium would go. Jeff Boone stated that the measurement was taken from the closest corner. He also stated that at the time he did not know where the proposed crematorium was going.
- 2.34 Peter Yapp also asked Jeff Boone if he performed an actual measurement. Jeff stated that he did not. He obtained his measurement via satellite/GPS website.
- 2.35 Jeff Boone's presentation stated that no testing was required or would be done by DEP. Peter Yapp noted that he visited a crematorium. Mr. Yapp stated that at this crematorium, he was told by DEP that all testing for air pollution was done by an independent testing agency.
- 2.36 Jeff Boone's presentation stated concerns about mercury. He showed information on mercury emissions from crematories increasing 10x from 2007 to 2009. He showed information from the US EPA website which that stated that "there remains a lack of good empirical data on the magnitude of mercury emissions from crematoria"
- 2.37 Jeff Boone noted DEP doesn't require (mercury) scrubbers in the smoke stack. Scrubbers remove soot and mercury from smoke stacks. Dick Montiminy noted that scrubbers are an option that can be installed.
- 2.38 Jeff Boone showed the DEP approval letter that said that only temperature and Opacity were required to be measured by a crematory. Mr. Yapp said he thought the crematory they visited measured more, and it was agreed that this would be further discussed with Mass DEP and the Crematory manufacturer when they are presented to the group.

- 2.39 Jeff Boone noted there were many chemicals in the human body and that many of them are in very minute amounts, but they are there.
- 2.40 Peter Yapp noted Littleton water has all kinds of minerals in it too, but the percent is so low that our water is considered the cleanest water around.
- 2.41 Charlie Ellis noted that in his opinion, bodies still leach chemicals into the ground. Cremation would prevent this ground pollution from taking place. Mr. Desisto said that particle matter and mercury sent up into the air as tiny particles was much more dangerous.
- 2.42 Jeff Boone noted some cemeteries are now offering green burials and this was another possible business that could be considered for Littleton. Mary Gosby had an article about these green cemeteries.
- 2.43 Discussion ensued about health, detriment vs. the location of a crematorium in Cambridge. This crematorium is located in city environment. It was suggested that if there were any detriment to public health in Cambridge, the City of Cambridge wouldn't they have shut down this crematorium? Mr. Desisto said that Cambridge was a city with more tolerance for pollution and people moved to Littleton to get away from the City
- 2.44 Discussion followed about the format for the next scheduled meeting – Consensus was to keep bringing in speakers both Pro & Con for 1st hour then hold discussions 2nd hour.
- 2.45 VOTE: Charlie Ellis – motioned to adjourn. Richard Crowley seconded, no discussion, Vote was unanimous.
- 2.46 Next Meeting: July 20th, 7 PM, room 307, Town Hall

Meeting Adjourned