

CEMETERY COMMITTEE

A G E N D A

TOWN OF CHINCOTEAGUE

Meeting has been Rescheduled to:

January 29, 2013 - 6:00 P.M. – Council Conference Room - Town Hall

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

OPEN FORUM / PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

AGENDA ADOPTION:

1. Draft Cemetery Preservation Plan
2. Cemetery Maintenance Fund
3. Committee Member Comments

ADJOURN:



MEMORANDUM

Town of Chincoteague Inc.

Date: January 29, 2013

To: Cemetery Committee

From: Robert Ritter, Town Manager
William Neville, Planner

Subject: Draft Cemetery Preservation Plan

The Town of Chincoteague Cemetery Committee has reviewed an inventory map of the 25 private cemeteries and documented who has maintained each one over the last several years. A priority ranking for maintenance needs was established on a cemetery key to identify:

- 1) cemeteries that need additional assistance (volunteers or donations),
- 2) cemeteries that are currently under active maintenance through the efforts of the Committee, and
- 3) cemeteries that are privately maintained

Since the last meeting, Public Works Director Spurlock estimated the time and cost for the Town to provide regular support for the maintenance of the Island cemeteries that were not currently being maintained by volunteers or through donations. This work effort was estimated at approximately 40 hours per month or \$1,000 per month for planning purposes. A change in priority or reallocation of existing staff time is proposed.

The Committee created a cleanup fund several years ago to defray the expense of having key Island cemeteries mowed when volunteer help could no longer be found. This fund has been used to provide timely mowing to several cemeteries when the need arose. Based on a review of donations and expenses from 2005 to 2012, a new request for donations similar to the one used for the Cemetery Cleanup Fundraiser in 2008 was mailed out in July. This resulted in donations sufficient to cover the cost of a late summer mowing of the major cemeteries.

Long term strategies for cemetery maintenance that have been considered by the Committee include:

- A. Request an amendment to the Town Charter to specifically allow the creation of an Authority or Commission for long term maintenance of private cemeteries on Chincoteague Island

- B. Prepare a Cemetery Preservation Plan, identify cemetery ownership, encourage the creation of a non-profit foundation to provide perpetual care
- C. Continue the current Cemetery Committee and promote the separate dedicated donation fund that is managed by the Town Finance Department
- D. Seek approval of Town Council to include cemetery maintenance and repair as a responsibility and budget line item for the Public Works Department.

Town Attorney Poulson has advised that Option A is not supported by the State or Town Code at this time. Option B represents the current short-term strategy of the Town Cemetery Committee and may be revised to include an ‘expanded membership’ on the committee and a more formal process for organizations to adopt and care for a particular cemetery. Option C and D may provide a long term solution that the Committee could recommend to the Town Council.

Committee members have expressed a strong preference for keeping the Town government involved in the long term care of the community cemeteries rather than passing the responsibility to an independent Authority. However, if a separate non-profit organization was established to assist with fundraising for perpetual care, it would be consistent with the Town Code, Chapter 2, Section 1:

“...to cooperate with any nonprofit corporation in the improvement and care of burial places and the approaches thereto; and to provide for the perpetual upkeep and care of any plot or burial lot therein, the Town is authorized...”

The inventory maps and priority ranking prepared by staff are intended to be a working document for fund raising, providing maintenance instructions, or competitive bidding for the care of individual cemeteries. Staff recommends that this information should be presented to the community as a ‘Cemetery Preservation Plan’ that follows national and state guidelines.

At this time, the draft Cemetery Preservation Plan is ready for the Committee to make any final changes or send the Plan to the Town Council with a recommendation for adoption as an element of the Town Comprehensive Plan.

Cemetery Committee Recommendations

Adoption of the Cemetery Preservation Plan to include:

- 1) A plan for short term action (based on strategy C) to continue with the voluntary cleanup fund, an annual donation appeal in local papers, along with a public interest article on local cemeteries.
- 2) A plan for long term action (based on strategy B) to encourage the creation of a nonprofit foundation to assist with fundraising for perpetual care
- 3) On a temporary basis, authorization for the Director of Public Works to allocate up to 40 hours per month of manpower as needed to complete regular cemetery maintenance in addition to providing an annual monetary donation to the Cleanup Fund.
- 4) A Committee project to research the ownership of each cemetery, obtain letters of permission when possible to allow maintenance activities, and complete a sketch plan for each cemetery.
- 5) Appointment of two additional members of the Cemetery Committee to represent local churches, funeral directors or civic organizations that traditionally assist the Committee