

Veterans Memorial Cemetery Association

September 13, 2011
VFW Post, Leighton Road, Augusta

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order by Kelley Wynne at 9:00 a.m. Guests of the Association were introduced:

Kevin Woodward: VFW Commander
Peter Meisberger: VFW Executive Committee Member
Andy Dumas: VFW Executive Committee Member; Caribou Veterans Cemetery
Patricia Theriault, Minutes

OPENING CEREMONY: Kelley Wynne (Pledge of Allegiance to Our Flag)

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS:

Present: Kelley Wynne, Chairman
Charles H. Bennett, Vice Chairman
Mike Clark, Treasurer
Marvin Woodbury, DAV
Gary E. Laweryson, Marine Corps League
Jack Stearns, Purple Heart
Arthur J. Roy, VFW
David Richmond, Director

Excused Absent:
Mike Murphy, Secretary
Peter Ogden, Veteran Services
General Bill Libby, Adjutant General

Required number of voting members for quorum is five; **seven voting members present.**

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

- Kelley Wynne sent the minutes of the Association Special Meeting in July 2011 to members of the committee in July for review.
- Kelley Wynne made a motion to accept the minutes of the Veterans Memorial Cemetery Association, Special Meeting, on July 5, 2011 as written.
- Mike Clark seconded the motion.
- The motion to accept the minutes as written was voted on and passed.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

- The Treasurer's Report was reviewed and presented by Treasurer Mike Clark.
- There was determined to be need for further discussion on the status of the Battlefield Cross fundraising efforts.
- Arthur Roy made a motion to accept the Treasurer's report as written.
- Gary Laweryson seconded the motion.

- The motion to accept the report as written was voted on and passed.

SUPERINTENDANT'S REPORT:

David Richmond discussed the beneficial impact of a \$440,000 grant from the VA which has provided funding for Farley & Sons to begin cleaning and aligning headstones this fall at the Civic Center Drive cemetery. The anticipated goal is to complete 1600 stones this year, with a three-year plan for completion. The crew will begin in the "O" section, then move to "P", then "Q" and "R", moving clockwise. Dave explained that the VA is using the Civic Center Drive cemetery as a "poster child" for future grant funding for similar projects.

Marvin Woodbury questioned what the status would be of money left over.

Mr. Richmond explained that unused money would not be Association money. It is not money in a bank account. It is VA grant money.

Arthur Roy asked if the money was not all spent at Civic Center Drive, whether it could be used at the other cemetery.

Mr. Richmond explained that, no, the grant is specific to Civic Center Drive.

Mr. Richmond went on to discuss progress at the Spring Vale Cemetery, including construction of an Administration Office and a new niche wall. Construction is to begin later in the week. Six foundations for niche walls are already in place. As there will be active construction in two locations at the cemetery, on the admin building and the niche wall, with active burial and committal services taking place between the construction sites, there is consideration happening about putting up a tent for the services temporarily. Mr. Richmond indicated that both construction projects need to be completed by Memorial Day 2012.

Mr. Richmond reviewed the cracksealing at Mt. Vernon and Civic Center Drive cemeteries. A price was requested for 8000 square feet of overlay, but there will probably be just sealing.

Mr. Richmond also discussed the disinterment price approved by the state. The state must recoup some of the money. A private cost is unknown, but a cost for a full casket disinterment is \$1400 for the state fee, not including a funeral director. It is not as expensive for cremation remains; \$800 for disinterment and re-interment. The state recoups the money for the crew redoing the grave site.

Kelley Wynne asked if vacated plots could be reused.

Mr. Richmond responded that yes, the plots were kept track of and could be used if families requested a plot at Civic Center Drive.

Mr. Richmond discussed the status of his crew. One member of the crew has moved to another position with the state, and so Mr. Richmond has put in a request to hire. He currently has three men on his crew. The contractor gets done in October.

Gary Laweryson talked about a VA program that encourages veterans to return to work.

Mr. Richmond talked about CWT, a work transition program for disabled veterans to return to work that he has utilized in the past. Mr. Richmond acknowledges that working at the cemetery requires a certain skill set. He has had workers through the program four or five years ago, but none since.

Mr. Laweryson talked further about the new program he had heard about just a month or two ago, in which the VA helps fund the work placement position. Mr. Laweryson will get some contact information to Mr. Richmond.

Mr. Richmond talked about the completion of rebuilding sections of the fence around the Civic Center Drive cemetery.

Charles Bennett thanked Mr. Richmond for his efforts on repairing the fence around the maintenance area, and for clearing up the maintenance area to improve its appearance. Mr. Bennett remarked on uprights that had been damaged, which are being taken care of.

CHAIRMAN REPORT:

Kelley Wynne presented resumes of three women interested in becoming members of the Veterans Memorial Cemetery Association. Their names and interest were connected through the assistance of Terry Moore, Commissioner of the Maine Women's Veteran Association.

The interested women are:

- Diane Culleton, Veteran, Maine Women's Veteran Association
- Florence Henderson, Veteran, Maine Women's Veteran Association
- Louise Dorr, *not a Veteran, but has been extremely active in volunteer and fundraising work for Veteran organizations, including the Veterans Memorial Cemetery Association.*

Members of the Association reviewed the three candidates resumes.

There was General Discussion about the candidates resumes.

- Gary Laweryson made a motion to appoint Florence Henderson as the "Women Veterans" representative.
- Charles Bennett seconded the motion.
- The motion was voted on and passed unanimously.

- Gary Laweryson made a motion to appoint Diane Culleton as a "Public-At-Large" representative.
- Arthur Roy seconded the motion.
- The motion was voted on and passed unanimously.

- Gary Laweryson made a motion to appoint Louise Dorr as a “Public-At-Large” representative.
- Mike Clark seconded the motion.
- The motion was voted on and passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS:

Mike Clark discussed the Veterans Memorial Cemetery Association website, which has over 10,000 members. Mr. Clark asked the committee for suggestions for improvements to the website.

Gary Laweryson suggested updating pictures on the site.

Kelley Wynne identified that three sets of Association minutes were not posted, and requested that they be identified as “not available” on the site.

Gary Laweryson suggested posting updated information about headstones, costs of disinterment and re-interment.

Mike Clark put out a general request for information to members of the Association.

Arthur Roy questioned whether the Association pays for the website.

Mike Clark responded that the Association pays \$20.00 a year and \$6.95 per month for the site.

Kelley Wynne indicated that he will contact Mike Murphy to have him send Mike Clark information for the website.

David Richmond indicated that he would also send pictures and information to Mike Clark for the website.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Marvin Woodbury asked whether the By-laws had been rewritten and completed (as had been discussed in the Special Meeting, July 5, 2011).

Kelley Wynne stated that Yes, they had been completed and posted in August.

Charles Bennett indicated to the group that the changes had been made to Article II of the by-laws, and Mr. Bennett presented a copy to Mr. Woodbury to read aloud to the group.

Mr. Woodbury read the revised Article II aloud to the Association members.

- Charles Bennett made a motion to accept the By-laws as written.
- Marvin Woodbury seconded the motion for the purposes of discussion.

Arthur Roy began the discussion with a review of the unanimous VFW Executive Committee vote, which was that the money they donate is only for the purpose of beautification. Mr. Roy indicated that his responsibility was to act as a representative of the VFW on the Veterans Memorial Cemetery Association, but that he did not have the power to spend money without VFW authorization.

Kelley Wynne rebutted saying that he served on the Veterans Memorial Cemetery Association as a member and representative of the AMVETS. As representatives, we vote all the time. The AMVETS give me the power to vote.

Charles Bennett indicated that he serves as the representative for the American Legion – same thing, they give me the power to vote.

Kelley Wynne questioned why there was a VFW representative if they did not have the power to vote.

Kevin Woodward addressed the fact that this is a committee, and Arthur Roy is a representative. The by-laws of the VFW outline Mr. Roy's responsibility.

Charles Bennett questioned to clarify that the by-laws of the VFW do not authorize a representative to vote to spend?

Kevin Woodward questioned whether Mr. Bennett's organization (American Legion) by-laws do authorize him as a representative to vote to spend.

Mr. Bennett stated that he is authorized to spend with 2/3 majority vote.

Kelley Wynne suggested that since the VFW representative is not authorized to vote on fiscal matters by the by-laws of the VFW, a special fund can be set up on which the VFW representative does have the authority to vote; and no other financial votes may be cast.

Arthur Roy changed the subject to question the matter of maintenance of purchases made by the Association, raising the hypothetical situation of a snowplow striking a granite bench which the Association hypothetically purchased, and questioning who would be responsible to repair / replace said bench.

David Richmond replied that yes, as they have been, the Association is responsible for repairs and replacement of monuments purchased by the Association.

Arthur Roy questioned what monuments David Richmond was referring to.

David Richmond specified several of the monuments, including the Chapel and the Curtis Bell Court, as well as the Association's replacement of recurrent damage to vases.

Arthur Roy questioned whether there was insurance to cover damage.

Kelley Wynne reminded members that the purpose of the Association was to service Veterans.

Arthur Roy stated that he “can’t see replacing monuments”, and questioned how many organizations are raising money.

There was a general discussion about examples in the Caribou Cemetery, and of the effectiveness of the Northern Maine Cemetery Association by Andy Dumas and David Richmond.

Marvin Woodbury stated that it was his understanding that the Cemetery was turned over to the state once it was completed.

David Richmond and Kelley Wynne stated that it was not the case that the cemetery was turned over to the state upon completion.

Charles Bennett remarked that the state does do beautification work for the Association in its own way, and that Dave Richmond does not come to the Association for reimbursement for that work. Mr. Bennett gave the example of \$3000 worth of mulch purchased by Mr. Richmond this year. Also the repairs to the fence around the gate. Mr. Bennett stated that one hand must wash the other, and asked the committee members what was being argued about.

Arthur Roy stated that people who are donating to the VFW (he specified that he sold bricks), are specifying that their donations are for beautification. Mr. Roy stated that when the VFW voted, they voted that their funds be used specifically for beautification, not maintenance. Mr. Roy stated that he was told “point blank” no maintenance.

Andy Dumas stated that if a donation is specified for an individual project, it should be dedicated to that project.

Gary Laweryson posed a question to Kevin Woodward: has the VFW always had to vote on money spent by the Cemetery Association?

Kevin Woodward responded “No.”

Gary Laweryson reminded members that the past notes state that there is a Perpetual Care Fund in the Association budget. Mr. Laweryson also reminded the VFW representative that “if you don’t have the ability to vote on money, it doesn’t hinder the Cemetery Association.”

There was General Discussion on VFW Council by-law impact on VFW representative to Veterans Memorial Cemetery Association voting ability.

Andy Dumas stated that he did not believe it would require a change in the VFW by-laws to authorize the VFW representative to vote.

Kevin Woodward quoted part of state legislation, section 512, regarding monies known as “The Fund”.

Kelley Wynne followed up on Mr. Woodward’s quotation, having served on the Special Committee that developed the legislation. It specifies that 33-50% of every burial be put aside for perpetual care of the cemeteries. But this money, “The Fund”, is state money, not Association money.

David Richmond clarified that there are several types of accounts that exist for operating money.

Andy Dumas question to whom the Chapel actually belongs.

David Richmond stated that the State of Maine holds the deed.

Kelley Wynne added that the Veteran’s Memorial Cemetery Association holds the responsibility, as the Chapel was built through the fundraising efforts of Father LeClair, not through monies from the State. The State is prohibited from building Chapels.

There was general discussion about whether specific comments were made that plywood would be used to board up the windows of the chapel as a repair by the state. Kelley Wynne referred members of the Association to the minutes of the Special Meeting on July 5, 2011;

“Charles Bennett asked a question of Peter Ogden about the future of the stained glass windows in the chapel if they are not repaired by the Association. Mr. Ogden replied that it is not within the State’s ability to repair and maintain stained glass windows, and that if the State is required to replace the windows, they will be replaced with plain glass. Mr. Bennett then posed to the group that stained glass maintenance is beautification, given the alternative of plain glass.”

David Richmond discussed the effectiveness of the meetings of the Northern Maine Cemetery Association, and praised that group for working quickly and efficiently. Mr. Richmond stated that Arthur Roy is partly correct; some of the Association’s money is probably there for beautification. He indicated, however, that the Association does not need such a large fund, and that the fund needs to be split in order to be effective. He stated that in the way of solving the problem, one hand needs to wash the other. If something is important to the committee, important to the state: work together. The state helps where the state can, the Association helps where the association can. It is not beneficial to come together every three months and argue about what is beautification and what is maintenance. The Association needs to come together and do what needs to be done for the veterans and their families.

Marvin Woodbury would like to see all of the Cemetery Committees in the state come together one time each year.

Kevin Woodward commented that today’s meeting had answered many of his questions. He stated that he would bring the information back to his organization to clarify what is being done

and what needs to be done. He reiterated that some patrons are firmly committed to beautification.

There was more General Discussion on the fact that the state holds the deed to the cemetery and the Chapel, and who then holds the responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance.

The statement was made by Kelley Wynne and Gary Laweryson that if the state cannot maintain the cemetery, then the Federal Government steps in to recoup the money they have funded for the cemetery.

Kelley Wynne reminded the group that there was a motion on the floor about whether to accept the change of by-laws as written.

- Gary Laweryson seconded the motion
- The question was to accept the changed by-laws as written.
- Votes were submitted anonymously in written form, and counted by Gary Laweryson.
- Responses: Six votes Yes, one vote No.
- Motion Passes, new by-laws in effect.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mike Clark presented the idea of selling Extended Warranties to families on bricks, monuments and vases.

- Mike Clark made a motion to provide Extended Warranties.
- Arthur Roy seconded the motion.

There was General Discussion about amounts, implementation processes, and the development of a record-keeping process.

The group decided that appropriate amounts would be as follows (added on to existing prices):

\$5.00 for a vase
\$10.00 for a brick
\$150.00 for a small monument
\$200.00 for a large monument

- There was a vote on the implementation of Perpetual Care Extended Warranties
- The vote passed, with one abstaining.

David Richmond revisited the discussion begun during the Treasurer's report on the Fundraising needs for the Battlefield Cross. Fundraising efforts are in need of a boost.

There was General Discussion about using the existing (small) Battlefield Cross as a traveling monument to move from one cemetery to another, using caution that it not be damaged. Mr. Richmond indicated that the existing small Battlefield Cross is in need of a stand.

Gary Laweryson may know someone who can create a stand for the cross.

Kevin Woodward stated that he appreciated the clarification he gained during the meeting, and the work that the committee does for Veterans.

Peter Meisberger thanked the members of the Association for the clarification and understanding that he gained from attending today's meeting.

Kelley Wynne stated that he appreciated the input and assistance of the members of the Caribou Cemetery Association in developing a successful working committee, and apologized for not having the VFW members on the agenda, as he was not notified that they would be in attendance at today's meeting.

Kevin Woodward indicated that he would bring a motion to the VFW to allow the VFW representative to the Veterans Memorial Cemetery Association to make decisions and vote on financial matters.

NEXT AGENDA:

- Welcoming New Association Members
- Battlefield Cross

- Charles Bennett made a motion to adjourn.
- Gary Laweryson seconded the motion.
- Motion passes, meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

NEXT MEETING, DECEMBER 13, 2011, 9:00A.M., VFW, LEIGHTON RD, AUGUSTA

Respectfully Submitted,

Patricia Theriault