

**Cemetery Trustees Meeting**  
**Friday, January 18, 2022 9:30 AM**

**Lyme Historians**

Minutes

Present: Michael Hinsley, Laurie Wadsworth; Jay Cary (remotely), Trustees;  
John Biglow, Margaret Caudill-Slossberg, guests

Meeting called to order 9:40 AM, with Trustee Jay Cary joining us by Zoom. We welcomed John Biglow, newly elected Trustee of the Trust Funds.

Trustees discussed how we should handle requests for winter burials. Michael reported on his conversation with Bill (& wife Penny) Hodge of Thetford Center, VT. First, Bill will dig graves for us. He has his own excavator and has been doing this, in several surrounding town cemeteries, since 1989. Secondly, Bill strongly recommends against winter burials, for several reasons, such as: possible dislodging of nearby stones, formation of ice below and above both vaults and unvaulted remains; difficulty of clean-up, which often has to be postponed until spring.

We welcomed Margaret Caudill-Slosberg, who had inquired about “green” winter burials. She and her husband had attended the July presentation by Lee Webster about green burials and learned then about how cremations are environmentally destructive. Trustees explained that we allow “unvaulted,” burials without embalming or chemicals, but do not follow all the “green” burial guidelines. Michael reiterated the problems with unvaulted interments in the winter, adding scientific facts for Margaret, a retired physician. We also explained our decision to remove from the new regulations the specific dates (May 1 - Nov. 1) that our cemeteries are open, since exceptions might be made for mild weather, to accommodate citizens’ religious beliefs, or to keep families buried together. (There is no site in Lyme for winter storage of bodies.) Each case can be addressed as it comes up; however, we discourage winter burials. Margaret had also asked about the additional charge for unvaulted burials for “maintenance” and why when you buy a plot can’t two people occupy same plot if there is no casket, only a shroud? Laurie had explained about the extra charge. The question of multiple burials brought up a lengthy conversation about the logistics, with the conclusion being that it mostly depends on the dates of deaths, allowing time for decomposition without disturbing the original body. For the most part, there is room in Highland Cemetery now for individual plots for decades to come. Margaret thanked us before she left for an Emergency Response Team meeting, which she leads. Letter from Michael Whitman: Michael had requested our review of a letter he’s proposing to write to the Listserv promoting green burials. We identified two errors: Lyme does not allow “green” burials, but “unvaulted;” Lyme does have a designated area for these burials within Highland Cemetery. **Laurie will** reply to him with these corrections.

That second topic, of a designated area for unvaulted burials, led to an extended discussion about where in Highland we should designate for these. Formerly, we had thought that under the middle row of pines would be a good place, but upon rethinking this, we considered the areas along both the SW corner, along the fence, or the NW corner, both times outside the existing road in the cemetery. Debating both the aesthetic and practical aspects led us to realize we need

to examine these areas in person first. We will each try to walk there within the next few weeks. In the meantime, **Laurie will** tell the Town Clerk that she can sell lots, and we commit to laying out their exact location by June 1, 2022.

Along that line, Jay had reported that after he and Laurie visited the shed with Scott Bailey on Jan. 4 and retrieved Bill's paperwork left there, he has scanned them all and passed them on to the Town Clerk for safekeeping. Discussion of the layout of plots led us to realize that we do not have a good handle on where additional plots can be. **Michael and Laurie will** try to meet in the Town Office and study the recent physical cemetery records there to ensure that all the information is correct and in one place.

Michael addressed two questions from guest John Bigelow about the possible needs for (1) additional land in Lyme for "natural" burials, and (2) addition of agents to promote decomposition in unvaulted burials. The answer is negative in both cases.

Cate & Prince and CCL's plans for Black History Month: Laurie asked all of our opinions about bringing up our request for input about honoring/educating citizens about the enslaved people who are buried in Lyme, taking advantage of the publicity through CCL, or even sponsoring a "forum" during the month of February. Upon reflection, and with a useful analogy from John about "veritas and lux" (truth and light) as well as his cautions about the possible controversy over the current debate about "critical race theory," we decided against that. Instead, we will first actively seek input from the African American community in the Upper Valley. **Michael will** pursue a lead about a woman in Thetford who might help us.

We added wording to the regulations to more specifically address the issue of winter burials. Laurie will send out a revised copy for Trustees' approval.

At this point, we entered Executive session to talk about the Sexton position. After a 2 hour meeting, we decided that for now we will reassure the Select Board that until that hire can be thoughtfully made, we Cemetery Trustees will endeavor to fill all the duties of the Sexton, both coordinating with the Town Clerk (records) and the physical needs in the cemeteries themselves, working with Scott Bailey and others as needed. We will also plan to meet more often, as needed, this winter.

Meeting adjourned 11:40 AM

Respectfully submitted,  
Laurie Wadsworth