



# TOWN OF GROVELAND

## CEMETERY COMMISSION

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### 2015 Annual Report

The Riverview Cemetery and Small Pox Cemetery are Town-owned cemeteries that are managed by a 3-member elected Cemetery Commission. Operation and maintenance of the cemeteries is provided by one full time superintendent and part time summer grounds keepers.

Richard Sciacca, a long-standing Cemetery Commissioner, former Selectman, Town Clerk, and School Committee member, died in early 2015. Dick was a passionate advocate for the cemetery and gave hours and hours of his time to document the Cemetery's burial records. His loss is deeply felt. In his memory, an American elm tree has been planted in the cemetery by the Cemetery Commissioners.

**Statistics.** In 2015, there was unprecedented activity as follows:

|  |    |
|--|----|
| • Burials  |    |
| – Traditional                                    | 17 |
| – Cremation                                      | 14 |
| • Lots Purchased                                 | 5  |
| • Headstone/Monument Foundations                 | 4  |
| • Footstones (Not Including Military Footstones) | 3  |
| • Restoration (Resetting) of Headstones          | 63 |
| • Conservation (Cleaning) of Headstones          | 58 |

**Preservation Plan.** The draft Riverview Cemetery Preservation Plan was delivered in spring 2015 and reviewed by the Commission. On June 9th, the plan's recommendations were presented to the Town at a public hearing, televised, and extensively replayed over the Town's Government TV channel. Completion of the final plan was delayed by the completion of the headstone assessment section, which by the end of the year was completed.

**Drainage Study.** The foremost recommendation of the Preservation Plan was to develop a Storm Water Management Plan. Completion of this plan is a prerequisite to resurfacing roads in the cemetery and in making other upgrades. A contract was awarded to CME Associates to survey the cemetery and develop a storm water management plan. This effort has been jointly funded by the Cemetery using sale of lots funds and the Highway Department using Chapter 90 funds. This plan will include a cemetery-wide contour map with engineering designs of storm water management structures.

**Entrance Restoration.** At the 2015 Town Meeting, a warrant article funded by a Community Preservation Act (CPA) appropriation was approved to restore the entrance to the cemetery, which was another Preservation Plan recommendation. This restoration will include restoration of the Griffith Memorial Arch, the front stone wall, and the burial crypt. This work will be performed in CY2016.

**Headstone Conservation.** Conservation and restoration of headstones and monuments in the cemetery was a recommendation of the Preservation Plan and is a high priority. On April 28-30, headstone conservator Jonathan Appell was hired using Perpetual Care Funds to restore damage done in the cemetery from snow removal activities and to restore on a triage basis the 18th century slate headstones in the Old Burying Ground. A total of twenty-seven (27) slate and nineteen (19) granite and marble headstones and corner markers were restored. This professional restoration work is expensive, but is critical restoration work that needs to be performed on an annual basis to fix the most complex headstone damage.

Complementing this paid conservation work is the work performed by our volunteers and cemetery staff. In September 2014, ten (10) Groveland residents were trained in headstone conservation by a grant from the Massachusetts Sesquicentennial Civil War Commission. Most of the participants were members of the American Legion (AL) Post. The AL team headed by Commander David Tuttle restored a John Deer tractor and using the cemetery's trailer has developed an effective capability to restore headstones. Concentrating on Civil War headstones, they reset seventeen (17) and cleaned fifty-eight (58) monuments and headstones. Remaining Civil War headstones and monuments needing work include resetting (13), cleaning (16), and fixing (5). In addition to the headstones, most of the Civil War markers have been restored. The goal is to have an authentic Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) marker on each Civil War stone. Through grants from the Massachusetts Sesquicentennial Civil War Commission and the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA) and private donations, 130 GAR Post 101 and 4 GAR Post 47 markers have been restored. To complete this project, we still need to replace 27 GAR Post 101 markers and to restore 2 GAR Post 47 markers. Cemetery funds are not being used to complete this work and donations are always appreciated.

**Tree Care and Planting.** Another major project recommended by the Preservation Plan is tree care and planting. Little tree care has been untaken in the cemetery in the last 50 years with the result that many of the trees have reached the end of their natural lives and undesirable trees have seeded themselves in the cemetery. Moreover, overhanging trees on the perimeter are threatening headstones and monuments. Using perpetual care funds, seven (7) days of tree service were completed in 2015. Only one large sugar maple tree remains to be removed and the rear of the cemetery needs to be trimmed. The plan also recommends the planting of approximately forty-one (41) new trees in the cemetery. The first tree was planted in memory of Richard Sciacca. Groveland Landscaping donated the planting of the tree. We are soliciting donations of memorial trees, but cannot act on these donations until the drainage study is completed this spring and we know where the drainage basins and culverts will be installed.

**Building Inspection.** The Groveland building inspector assessed the condition of the office/maintenance building and the hearse house near the cemetery entrance. In his written assessment, he noted many deficiencies in both buildings. Deficiencies that could be corrected using cemetery funds have been made, but the serious deficiencies are going to require additional funding. These include fire resistant chemical storage cabinet, fire rated door, eliminate duct work, cemetery records in fire rated cabinet, etc.

**Cemetery Fees.** The cemetery's fee schedule has not been reviewed or updated in many years. A survey of other cemetery fees was conducted and it showed that our burial lot purchase prices were low and that we were not charging for time consuming services like deed replacement and duplication services. A revised fee schedule was presented to the Board of Selectmen and approved. The sale of lots increase will provide additional funds to the Perpetual Care Endowment Fund that is needed to maintain the cemetery outside of the Town's annual appropriation.

**Landscape Maintenance.** Maintaining the cemetery's grounds and keeping its grounds well-groomed is a primary function of the cemetery staff. This is accomplished primarily by a small number of part-time summer help. This past year we were assisted by two days of Massachusetts Trial Court Community Service parolees who helped with both spring and fall cleanups. The Highway Department helped us with the use of their chipper to remove brush piles from the trimming of brush along the cemetery's perimeter. All of the benches within the cemetery were restored by the part time help and Barbara Stewart donated a solar powered light for the front flag pole. This additional manpower and donation of equipment and services outside of our budget is greatly appreciated.

Respectively Submitted,  
Groveland Cemetery Commission  
Robert Guptill, Chairman, Commissioner  
Debra Stewart, Commissioner  
Rock Dower, Commissioner

**Cemetery Software.** Acquisition of a computer-based cemetery management program is a top priority. We are still using 4 x 6 cards to manage the burial records for each lot. In addition to managing lot records, cemetery software will manage the sale of lots and services and will generate cemetery deeds. We have looked at a number of cemetery programs and most of these programs are web based allowing for remote public access to these records. In the coming year, we hope to purchase the best program that fits our need and integrate our business practices with that of the Finance Department.