



# TOWN OF GRANTHAM NEW HAMPSHIRE

## MEETING MINUTES

NOVEMBER 21, 2019, 10:30 A.M.

300 Route 10 South, Grantham, NH 03753

**APPROVED**

The meeting started at 10:45 a.m., November 21, 2019, in the Jerry Whitney Memorial Conference Room located at 300 Route 10 South, Grantham.

**Present:** Selectman Peter Garland, Selectman Constance Jones, Selectman and Cemetery Trustee Chair Warren Kimball, Cemetery Trustee C. Peter James, Town Administrator Melissa White, and Board Clerk Emily Owens.

**Public:** Candia Cemetery Trustee Chair Holly Haas and Owen Garland

The meeting started with introductions from Holly Haas, the Cemetery Trustee Chair for Candia, New Hampshire, Professional Genealogist, and Paralegal. C. Peter James recently attended a meeting of the New Hampshire Cemetery Association and Holly Haas presented Candia's Cemetery software for record keeping. He invited Ms. Hass to come speak because the Cemetery Trustees recognized that Grantham has a need for better record keeping. Ms. Hass spoke about the product that Candia currently uses and the research she had done before purchasing the final software, Pontem Cemetery Management Software. The cost to the Town of Candia was \$1,500.00 for the initial purchase of the database software, plus \$1,500.00 for the mapping program option, and \$595.00 yearly for the maintenance and technical support of the program. The first year, the technical support is free but the software is only available for one computer. Over time Ms. Hass and other employees are adding the data to the database. There is the option to back-up the data to the cloud but she prefers an external hard drive. As a rule, once every quarter they back the information up to two external hard drives.

Ms. Haas demonstrated the various functions of the software. The software is capable of storing documents and pictures, tracking genealogy, showing grave locations on maps, and searching through the database. The software stores information on the different cemeteries, their locations, legal descriptions, and who is buried there. A discussion ensued regarding who maintains the software and currently the Candia Cemetery Trustees and their employees maintain the software. When you first purchase the software the company will install it on your computer and walk you through how to use it. If you have any problems with the software, Ms. Haas says Pontem will call you back within twenty minutes. The criteria Ms. Haas used for selecting a software is its ease of use, mapping capable, and inexpensive cost. Pontem stays current with changes to Windows and other operating systems.

The conversation moved into discussing best practices such as Cemetery cleaning, deed recording, and NH Cemetery RSAs. With regards to the removal of personal items prior to winter, Candia removes and stores the items for thirty days prior to disposing of them. If a burial is recent, Candia will allow the larger items for thirty days and then ask that they be removed. Candia does allow dogs in the Cemetery but a sign is posted indicating owners must clean-up after them. Selectman Garland asked what Candia does with unused lots and Ms. Haas replied that they prod first to make sure the graves are really unoccupied. Additionally, every deed that Candia issues includes the statement "Grantee also acknowledges that Grantor, also known as the Cemetery Trustees, has the right to institute proceedings after proper notification, for the termination and forfeiture of the right and interests of the owner if the burial plot

in any cemetery has remained unused and unimproved for a period of fifty (50) years. (See RSA 289:18).” They also have the person purchasing the plot sign a statement saying they have read the Cemetery Usage Rules and Regulations. The signed paper is kept with the deed. Candia does not allow the transfer of deed from anyone other than the heir. The question was asked when the fifty years start on the forfeiture of any unused plots and Candia uses the first head stone in the group as a starting reference. Ms. Haas recommended that the Town website have a bulletin put out requesting a copy of plot deeds and any information about people buried in the graves.

A discussion ensued about who should enter the data into the software initially to bring the Town current. The Selectmen felt this was too much of an additional burden to place on the Town Office Staff. Additionally, it was discussed about who should have ownership of updating the database after all preexisting information has been entered. The Cemetery Trustees thought that the Board Clerk could enter the information into the computer. Mr. James explained the process of what the Sexton does including providing a handwritten bill of sale. Ms. Haas stated she has an electronic Bill of Sale and she would provide the Board Clerk with a copy. She also agreed to provide a copy of Candia’s Rules and Regulations, Deed, Pricing Guide and any other pertinent documents.

Next the topic transitioned to neglected burial grounds and the procedure for having a town take over ownership. Candia decided to take ownership of several Cemeteries after some of the fences and stairs became dangerous. The criteria they used for taking over ownership was if the Cemetery was mowed, trimmed, and maintained structurally. The procedure for having a Cemetery declared abandoned can be found under RSA 289:19-21. There was some discuss about which Grantham Cemeteries are currently private or public. The Cemetery Trustees felt this was something the Board should discuss at the next meeting. Research would need to done to determine if the Cemeteries in Grantham meet the twenty year requirement for being abandoned.

The attendees of the meeting thanked Candia Trustee Cemetery Chair Holly Haas for travelling to Grantham. The meeting ended at 12:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Emily Owens, Board Clerk