

Minutes

Wilmington Cemetery Commission

DATE

July 10, 2025

TIME

4:38 PM

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY

Mr. Richard Khachadorian

IN ATTENDANCE

Janet Boyd, Jennifer Goodell, Richard Khachadorian, Ralph Staib, Walter White

Sextons: John Boyd, Alan Davis, Todd Stewart

Guests: Donna Moore, Christine Richter

TOPICS

Finances

Maintenance/Structures

Chandler Family Cemetery

Burke Letter

Columbarium

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to accept the minutes from the June 12th meeting was made by Mr. Richard Khachadorian. This motion was seconded by Mr. Ralph Staib and unanimously passed.

FINANCES

The Selectboard will be approached in regard to the remaining funds needed to be raised for the Veteran's Memorial Park. A T-Mobil grant of \$50,000 is being applied for. It is anticipated the project could be completed in 2026.

MAINTENANCE

Restland- 8 stones are in need of repair. The tree in need of removal/pruning has been deemed to be private property, but problem branches can be pruned.

Riverview- Some stones on the east side of the cemetery are sliding off their bases. Mark Spiller could possibly fix them by easing them back onto their bases.

Chandler- One marble stone is broken. A large maple branch is broken but will likely not cause much damage. One limb will need to be removed. The property owner will be contacted via USPS. A letter will be drafted by Ms. Jennifer Goodell and reviewed at the August 14th meeting.

Intervale- Fill is needed.

BURKE LETTER

The commission received a letter from Ms. Patti Burke inquiring why a tree she planted fifteen years ago had been moved. Mr. John Boyd explained trees often interfere with burials, stones and general up-keep of a cemetery. Trees are often moved for these reasons. Ms. Burke claimed the tree she planted was currently not causing such issues nor would it in the future. Mr. Walter White stated the commission deemed no more trees will be planted in Riverview due to maintenance issues. A map of Riverview was produced by Mr. John Boyd. It was determined Ms. Burke's tree was in the right of way of the town of Wilmington. It was agreed further research would be conducted, the town attorney consulted and Ms. Buke would be contacted during the August 14th meeting. (please see attachment)

COLUMBARIUM

It has been suggested a columbarium be offered at Intervale Cemetery. Mr. Todd Stewart presented various styles and prices. There was concern the aesthetic might not capture the character of the cemetery or patrons. There was also apprehension patrons whom have already purchased plots might not find a columbarium desirable.

SEXTON'S REPORT

Members of the public have been consuming water from the hand pump in Riverview. The question was raised of placing a sign stating the water was strictly for maintaining the grounds. This was deemed unnecessary at this time.

MEETING ADJOURNED

Meeting adjourned at 6:11 PM.

NEXT MEETING

August 14, 2025, at 4:30, Wilmington Fire Department Conference Room.



Town of Wilmington Cemetery Commission
PO Box 217
Wilmington, VT 05363

June 28, 2025

To the Commissioners and Sextons:

Hello. My name is Patti Burke – some of you may remember me but many of you will remember my husband, Jim Burke who, I am very sad to say, died on April 12th. Among other roles he had during our 15 years in Wilmington, Jim was the Cemetery Sexton which was a role he had a lot of passion for, and he enjoyed serving the townspeople in this capacity.

In 2007 Jim and I bought two plots in Riverview Cemetery ‘up the road’ from our neighbor Kendall Morse’s plot. One was for my father’s cremains and one for Jim and my cremains someday. We purposefully bought at the end of the row so that we could plant a tree there as was allowed at the time. Our plans included a bench to put under the tree so we could sit and talk with my father and so folks could sit and visit with us someday.

When my father died in 2010, we went to Arboreal Habitat and worked with Adam to pick out the perfect tree – one that was native to the area, slow growing, medium-sized, and fit our personalities. The tree was a musclewood tree - its Latin name is *Carpinus Caroliniana* - the American hornbeam. It is a small hardwood understory tree and is also known as blue-beech, ironwood, or muscle beech. The common name – musclewood - comes from the appearance of the smooth bark with bumps underneath resembling muscles. The leaves are alternate with a doubly toothed margin and turn an attractive orange-red color in the fall. In early spring, yellow-green, male and fuzzy, yellow-green, female flowers mature.

Adam planted it and staked it and helped us keep it watered in its first months at Riverview. It did well and after a couple years the staking was able to be removed. Since Jim was so often at the cemetery, we were able to watch it grow for seven years and envisioned it as it might be by the time we passed away – which we hoped would be a long time in the future.

We moved to North Carolina in 2017 but still consider Vermont ‘home’ so when Jim unexpectedly died in April this year, I planned his celebration of life to be held there in Wilmington. It was on June 7th at the Old School Community Center and was a beautiful event with many folks sharing stories and memories of Jim. Before going back to NC, I ordered the bench we had long discussed from Shea Monuments and spent some time with Tom Lloyd getting things just right. I then went to visit the cemetery and my dad’s



grave and was very distraught to find there was no musclewood tree there! I just stood there crying - remembering how much we loved picking it out and caring for it. The vision we had of our 'space' in the cemetery under that tree was gone and it truly broke my heart as well as a bit of my spirit that day.

I reached out to my friend and neighbor, Donna Moore, who had been on the cemetery commission for years and asked her what happened to Jim's tree. She did some research and thinks it was moved to the memorial garden that was created at the roundabout at the end of the main road. While that garden is lovely, Jim's tree belongs where it was planted originally. She told me to contact the commissioners to resolve things so here I am.

I want to emphasize that we planted that tree correctly and within the rules at the time. We took care to ensure it was in the right place, cared for and thrived. Other trees that were planted in other sections in other years are still there, but our tree is not. It is not right for it to have been moved. Even if the rules have now changed – and even if some other trees were incorrectly planted and therefore had to be moved – that does not have any bearing on our tree that was correctly and legally paid for and planted by us 15 years ago when trees were allowed at the end of the rows in that section. Its absence is weighing heavily on my mind and causing me a lot of emotional pain.

I am asking you, the Cemetery Commissioners, to approve replacement of the tree so that what Jim and I planted and envisioned can be restored. I am willing to pay for a brand new musclewood tree from Arboreal Habitat to be planted back where the original was rather than asking you to disturb your memorial garden. I am hopeful that you will understand the need to correct this error and thus approve my request swiftly

I would like to attend your July 10th meeting via phone call/Facetime to discuss this 'in person' and to answer any questions you have. Meanwhile. I can be reached via email, text, or phone at the contact info below.

Thank you in advance for prompt attention to this matter.

Respectfully,

Patti Burke
802-780-8111
paburke11@icloud.com
1 Floppy Ear Trl
Waynesville, NC 28785

cc: jarchambault@wilmingtonvt.us