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MORRISTOWN

TOWN OF MORRISTOWN SELECTBOARD
SPECIAL MEETING NOTICE & AGENDA
COMMUNITY MEETING ROOM
On Zoom and at 43 Portland St. Morrisville, VT 05661
5:30 PM Thursday, May 1, 2025

Join Zoom Meeting or by phone join via conference call (audio only): 1 (646) 558-8656 | Meeting ID: 810 342 4528 | Passcode 05661
The meeting will be live streamed on the Town of Morristown's website: https://www.morristownvt.gov/community/page/meetings-agendas-minutes and on Town GMATV YouTube Channel when possible

I. 5:30PM - CALL SELECTBOARD MEETING TO ORDER

II. 5:31PM - AGENDA CHANGES/ADDITIONS

III. 5:35PM - NEW BUSINESS

1. Consideration of terminating Pleasant View Cemetery Association's (PVCA) fiscal and operational management of the Pleasant View Cemetery.
2. Consideration to direct PVCA that all Pleasant View Cemetery funds and other assets be turned over to the Town of Morristown.

IV. 6:30PM - ADJOURN

History: On Town Meeting Day March 6, 2001, the Town voted to *"take its burial ground out of the charge of the Town Board of Cemetery Commissioners, place the same under the charge of the Selectboard and authorize the Selectboard to delegate appropriate duties and tasks to third parties".* Don Anderson explained that this is being done so that the Town and Pleasant View Cemetery Assoc. can reorganize to better serve the Pleasant View Cemetery. On April 16, 2001, the Selectboard voted to turn the daily operation and funds of the Cemetery Commission over to the Cemetery Association. Motion passed.

Today: The Morristown Selectboard and Administration have serious concerns about the financial management of Pleasant View Cemetery and the stewardship of the endowment/perpetual care investment fund.

Outlined below is a summary of concerns:

1. The ongoing unrestrained depletion of the endowment/perpetual care fund. In September 2021 the value of the endowment/perpetual care fund was $364,401.00. As of April 2025, it is $123,487.00
2. The excessive withdrawal rate of the fund has had a severe impact on its viability.
3. The substantial withdrawals over the past 3 years brought the fund below the previous Investment Policy floor of $250,000.00. The remedy the PVC board took was to lower the floor to $50,000.00. This is unacceptable fiduciary responsibility of these funds.
4. In the PVC Association's current budget proposal for FY 25/26, it shows an additional $25,000.00 withdrawal from the fund to meet their current projected expenses. This is unsustainable.
5. The PVC Association has awarded contracts with companies to do tree cutting, stone cleaning, building repair and cemetery mapping requiring no bids.
6. Clegg Memorials was given a $44,290.00 no-bid contract to clean cemetery memorials.
7. Construction repair no-bid contract for $22,130.00 on the so-called Caretakers House was awarded to the cemetery caretaker's girlfriend's father. This calls into question a violation of their own Ethics and Conflict of Interest Policy.
8. Since 2013 PVC has paid out in mostly no-bid arrangements for tree removal services totaling $152,376.00
9. Lazarus Cemetery Mapping Company was awarded a $21,259.00 contract to map PVC burial lots. This was done even though the municipality had, several years ago, purchased a similar program for PVC and the Town Cemetery Association to use. The Town Cemetery Association is currently utilizing the program with success. PVC decided not to.
10. Vermont Monuments of Morrisville has been banned from doing any memorial work in PVC giving it's only in-town competitor (Clegg Memorials) exclusive local ability to serve the area. Mr. John Clegg now sits on the PVC Association board. This too is likely a violation of their Conflict of Interest Policy.
11. Endowment/perpetual care money was used to purchase and install an $10,762.00 monument to honor Gloria Wing. This was purchased on a no-bid contract from Clegg Memorials. There was no consideration to try and raise private funds to do this project.

12. Perpetual care money is paid to cemeteries at the time a cemetery plot(s) is purchased. It is to assure the plot owner that mowing and trimming is done in perpetuity. In the 2016/2017 town audit, the Town Auditor researched what portion of the so-called "endowment fund" money is attributed to perpetual care money. The research showed that of the $368,492.00 total value at that time, $200,000.00 was determined to be perpetual care funds and should be deemed non-spendable. The balance of the funds at that time, $168,492.00, were considered restricted. This was shared with the PVC board, and they agreed to this on October 19, 2017. The current total value of all funds is $140,785.00, well below the minimum non-spendable amount.
13. December 15, 2020, PVC received a check for $10,000.00 to be used exclusively for the "replacement and upkeep" for the Sheldon, Slayton, and Noyes family stones. The principal and interest of these funds are comingled with current investments and there has been no attempt to provide individual accounting for this money.
14. The PVC board has continued the practice of hiring employees to maintain the cemetery. This practice mandates workers compensation coverage, FICA payroll taxes, State and Federal unemployment taxes. One employee annually collects unemployment. PVC provides all equipment, fuel, equipment repairs and misc. supplies. The proposed budget for FY25/26 for payroll and related employment expenses is $33,650.00. In addition, the budget calls for $3,350.00 in fuel, small equipment, equipment maintenance, and capital equipment. A total of $37,000.00. A new mower and part-time employee were removed from the original budget proposal. In contrast, the Town's seven cemeteries contract out summer maintenance, which includes spring and fall cleanup. A bid was accepted for $19,000.00. PVC has indicated that they have no interest in putting the grounds maintenance out for bid.
15. The PVC board has stated they had approached a former Selectboard about projects they felt needed to be addressed at the cemetery. They state the board at that time told them they had a sizeable endowment, and they should utilize it. We have not been able to verify that conversation or context. What is evident is the sizable depletion of endowment/perpetual care funds with no intent to change practices or a plan to build back the fund.
16. It appears that in March 2025 that PVCA transferred $13,266.00 from the Endowment/Perpetual Care Fund into a new account. The Town would like to know what the use of this transfer of funds is designated for. More to the point, is the Association using these funds for any other purpose than what perpetual care funds are designated for?

Conclusion:
Based on the above information and previous discussions with the PVC board, it should be concluded that the Town of Morristown should take back the management of Pleasant View Cemetery and the fiduciary responsibility of the Endowment/Perpetual Care Funds.