

BALTIMORE TOWNSHIP MINUTES – SPECIAL CEMETERY MEETING
May 19, 2016

PRESENT: Supervisor Bill Miller, Treasurer Cheri Smith, Clerk Penelope Ypma, Trustee Art DeFields, Trustee Jake Ypma.

Meeting called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Supervisor Miller.

No public members were present.

Clerk Ypma updated the board on the Dowling Cemetery issue with the Cowles Family. On May 12, 2016, Deputy Clerk received a phone call from the Tom Cowles, son of deceased Juanita Cowles. Tom informed Deputy Clerk, Jake Ypma that they have been in contact with their attorney, David Lucas, of Battle Creek. The family was requesting that all six spaces they purchased in 1958 be returned to them. Funeral services are planned at Dowling Cemetery in 6 days. The six spaces have been resold to 3 other families.

Deputy Clerk Ypma contacted the township's attorney who handled the reclaimed cemetery lots in 2001. In 2001, the township reclaimed approximately 200 spaces at Dowling Cemetery. Jim Gouloze was the attorney who handled the reclaiming procedure. Attorney Gouloze suggested that the township try to recover the six spaces. Jim Gouloze instructed the township to look for any documentation or record keeping that pertains to the reclaiming of the cemetery lots and to contact the clerk and supervisor at the time of reclaiming for any additional information that they may recall. Attorney Gouloze informed the township of a fire he had and most-likely did not have any documentation.

The two attorneys were in contact with each other. Clerk Ypma did not return a phone call to Attorney David Lucas.

Clerk and Deputy Clerk searched all past minutes and files. Minutes dated January 2001 indicate the board hired James Gouloze as the attorney to handle the reclaiming of unused cemetery lots at Dowling Cemetery. No other records were found. Clerk Ypma called Tracy Mitchell, who was the clerk at the time. Tracy Mitchell reported she did not remember the process. Deputy Clerk contacted George Cullers, who was supervisor at the time. George Cullers reported that the process took a long time.

Sue Roush, cemetery sexton, called Clerk Ypma, to inform the township that she received a call from the funeral director, Mr. Bachman, of Bachman - Hebble Funeral Home, of Battle Creek, who claimed that the family will not be paying for a burial due to the added emotional hardship caused to the family. Clerk Ypma informed attorney J. Gouloze. Clerk Ypma received a call from David Cowles, son of deceased.

On May 16, 2016, Clerk Ypma, Deputy Clerk Ypma, and Cemetery Sexton, Sue Roush met David Cowles, son and Roger Cowles, spouse of Juanita at Dowling Cemetery. Also in attendance at that meeting was Jeff Sinclair, family friend of the Cowles. At that time, Clerk Ypma reported that 2 spaces of the original six were available (spaces 5 & 6 of Lot D). Clerk informed the family that she was trying to locate the other two families who owned the remaining spaces, but could not promise that would happen. The Cowles family was distraught. At that time, David Cowles informed clerk Ypma that the family would not pay for a burial. Also, if the spaces are reclaimed after the interment of their Mother, the family would disinter their Mother at the expense of those involved at the time of the reclaiming.

On May 17, Clerk Ypma reported to the Cowles family that all six spaces were reclaimed. Sexton Sue Roush and Clerk Ypma met with the Cowles family at the Dowling Cemetery to physically show the sextons where the burial would take place (Lot D, space 1). The family was very thankful for the efforts. The funeral was scheduled on May 18, 2016.

BURIAL PAYMENT - Moved by P. Ypma, supported by B. Miller, for the township to approve \$475.00 from the general fund to pay Gordon Roush, for the burial. All ayes. Motion carried.

STOP FUTURE SALES - Moved by A. DeFields, supported by J. Ypma, to stop the sale of any remaining reclaimed cemetery lots at the Dowling Cemetery until accurate documentation can be obtained. All ayes. Motion carried. Clerk Ypma will inform Sue Roush, cemetery sexton.

ATTESTED BY:

Bill Miller, Supervisor

Date

Penelope J. Ypma, Clerk

Date