



# Town of Reading Massachusetts

Department of Public Works - Cemetery Division

## Cemetery Regulations 2018

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## **FOREWORD**

The Town of Reading Home Rule charter adopted on March 24, 1986 and amended November 13, 2004 provides that:

"The Board of Cemetery Trustees shall be responsible for the preservation, care, improvement and embellishment of the Town's cemeteries and burial lots therein and such other powers and duties given to the Board of Cemetery Trustees under the Constitution and General Laws of the Commonwealth, by the Charter, by bylaw or by Town Meeting vote."

Working under this charge, the Board of Cemetery Trustees strives not only to fulfill its legal responsibilities regarding the Town's cemeteries, but also to preserve the aesthetic quality of our heritage. The Trustees encourage public comment at regularly scheduled meetings or via correspondence.

## **TOWN OF READING - CEMETERY REGULATIONS**

The Board of Cemetery Trustees has set forth the following regulations for the ownership, care and use of burial sites in the Town's cemeteries. The authority to do this is found in Chapter 114 of Massachusetts General Laws.

## RESIDENT REQUIREMENTS

- 1 The sale of lots is limited to current Reading residents only.

## OWNERSHIP OF LOTS

- 2 The Trustees shall set the price of lots which includes perpetual care. All lots must be paid in full at the time of the sale.
- 3 The owner of a lot(s) is limited to burying human remains in that site. In each regular grave space, one full size interment and one cremation urn, or two cremation urns will be allowed. Two cremation urns may be interred in each urn lot.
- 4 When a lot is purchased, the owner will be issued a deed specifying the location and dimensions of the lot. The deed will contain certain terms and conditions for the use of this lot. The Trustees are responsible for corner posts set at each lot. These will clearly define the number of the lot.
- 5 The owner of a lot may only transfer ownership of that lot by deed if such transfer is approved by the Trustees. A fee will be charged for the recording of deed transfer. The owner does not have a right to lease or sell the property.
- 6 Lots may be resold only to the Town of Reading, at the original purchase price.
- 7 Upon the death of the lot owner, the right of burial shall pass as provided by the statutes of Massachusetts in force at that time. The Trustees will require proof of the rights of ownership of such lot.

## CARE OF LOTS

- 8 "Perpetual Care" means the cutting of grass on the grave or lot at reasonable intervals, raking, clean-up, reseeding and other work as may be necessary to keep the lot(s) in good condition. Perpetual care does not include the repairing or replacing of memorials.

## USE OF LOTS

- 9 In order to preserve the aesthetic quality of Reading's cemeteries, and to ensure the safety of the public and cemetery staff, the following rules shall apply:
  - The owner of a lot(s) does not have the right to plant trees, shrubs or plants, or to erect a fence, curbing, hedge or any other landmark on the lot(s).
  - The Trustees have the right to remove any shrub, hedge, root or branch that they may deem detrimental to other cemetery lots.
  - Tributes shall be limited to fresh flowers in shatter-resistant vases, potted plants, or floral baskets not to exceed the width of the lot, the height of the headstone and no more than one foot (12 inches) forward of the headstone. No other decorations or objects will be allowed, and will be removed.
  - The Trustees have the right to remove any unsightly flowers, old vases, other containers, or any other decorations/objects that do not conform to the above, or that create a safety concern for the public and cemetery staff.
  - No vigil lights, solar lights, wooden crosses, or shepherd hooks will be allowed on any lot or grave.

- Tributes on single graves, veterans sections and urn lots are limited to one shatter-resistant container with a maximum diameter of 8 inches or one floral basket per grave.
- Decorations and additional tributes will be allowed for 14 days following an interment, and for one week before and after a federal or religious holiday.
- Nothing is allowed on top of or attached to the top of any memorial.
- Flags and flag holders honoring Veterans may remain year-round.

## MEMORIAL REGULATIONS

- 10 A memorial may be installed on a lot. The Trustees must approve the design and specifications for any memorial. Markers shall be of granite or bronze; upright memorials shall be of granite. No other materials shall be allowed.
- 11 Where permitted only one upright memorial of granite may be placed on a lot subject to limitations as outlined in other sections of these regulations. One marker may be set on an individual grave. Markers may not be set to embrace two or more graves. All markers shall be set flush with the ground. The foundations for all memorials will be installed by the Cemetery Department and a fee will be charged.
- 12 In Laurel Hill, a memorial will not be installed unless the lot is endowed with perpetual care. On old lots matching markers may be used if existing markers exceed regulation size. If upright headstones become broken or excessively tipped, the Trustees reserve the right to lay these into the ground as markers.
- 13 Neither the Trustees nor the Town shall be liable for damage to memorials or markers at any cemetery.
- 14 Any company or individual who is to set a grave box or work on or erect a memorial must obtain written permission from the Cemetery Supervisor before beginning work, and the work must be performed under the supervision of the Supervisor. The work area must be left in proper condition. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in the company or individual being barred from future work.

## MEMORIAL SPECIFICATIONS

- 15 The following regulations are for upright memorials. These limitations must be followed or the memorial may not be erected.

On a two grave lot, maximum size 3'0" x 1'0" base, 3' high  
On a three grave lot, maximum size 4'0" x 1'3" base, 3' high  
On a four grave lot, maximum size 4'6" x 1'6" base, 4' high  
On a five grave lot, maximum size 4'6" x 1'6" base, 4' high  
On a six grave lot, maximum size 5' x 2' base, 4' high  
On a seven grave lot, maximum size 5'6" x 2' base, 4' high  
On an eight grave lot, maximum size 6' x 2' base, 4' high

Unless otherwise noted all markers shall be 2' x 1', and shall be of bronze or granite. Baby grave markers shall be 1'3" x 0'8". Granite markers shall be consistently 4" thick.

In all Veteran sections, grave markers shall only be of bronze.

**SPECIAL REGULATIONS FOR CHARLES LAWN MEMORIAL PARK**

- 16 No upright memorial will be allowed on lots within this cemetery; only flat markers are permitted. Each individual or extra depth grave space may have one 2' x 1' marker. A central marker, no larger than 3' x 1', will be allowed on lots of two or more side by side burial spaces.
- 17 Floral tributes are limited to one shatter-resistant container with a maximum diameter of 8 inches or one floral basket per grave. No other decorations or objects will be allowed and will be removed, except as noted in #9.

**URN LOTS**

- 18 Two cremation urns may be interred in each lot.
- 19 Memorials will be limited to one 2' x 1' bronze marker in Forest Glen. Granite or bronze markers may be used in other cemeteries.

**INTERMENTS AND REMOVALS**

- 20 No interment or removal may be made before (a) a permit is issued by the Board of Health to the Supervisor, (b) the owner of the lot gives an order to use the lot, and (c) all fees have been paid.
- 21 The Supervisor must be given reasonable advance notice of an interment or removal. This notice must give the lot number, the grave number, name and age of deceased for a burial, burial container and name of the undertaker in charge. Neither the Supervisor nor the Trustees will be held responsible for any error in the given notice.  
  
Fees for opening graves, making and recording interments, reinterments, funerals after working hours or Saturday or holidays as well as other services will be established by the Trustees and shall be paid in advance.
- 22 Funerals will not be allowed on Sundays, New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day or Christmas Day.
- 23 All burial cases must be sectional concrete or monolithic containers.

**GENERAL REGULATIONS**

- 24 All funeral processions in the cemetery are under the direction and control of the Supervisor.
- 25 No firearms are allowed in any cemetery except for honor guard ceremonies.
- 26 Vehicles, except for those in a funeral procession, may be excluded from any cemetery. Maximum speed limit in any cemetery is fifteen miles per hour.
- 27 All persons walking through a cemetery must keep to the pathways and not trespass on lots except for gaining access to their own lot(s). Parents must take full responsibility for their children and not permit them to climb on headstones. Loitering, playing and dogs are not allowed.

- 28 Gravestone rubbing is not allowed.
- 29 Cemeteries are open from sunrise to one half hour after sunset.
- 30 The soliciting of business by anyone within the cemetery is prohibited.
- 31 No employee shall receive any fee or gratuity from any person except the standard fees prescribed by the Trustees and to be paid to the Town. Any employee violating this rule will be subject to disciplinary action.
- 32 The Trustees shall have authority to grant to owners to depart in special instances from the provisions of the foregoing regulations in cases where it clearly appears that the spirit and intent of the regulation will not thereby be violated.