

Approved Minutes of Meeting September 16, 2020

Location: ZOOM meeting (hosted by City of Warwick)

In attendance: (via ZOOM) Pegee Malcolm, Walter Slocumb, Bob Butler, Joe Jordan, Lew Keen, Alan Clarke, Marjory O' Toole, Russ DiNoto, Caroline Wells, Jeff Burns, Judy Fardig, Richard Ring, Betty Mencucci, Edna Kent, and Christine MacWilliams

Excused absences: Charlotte Taylor and Jim Bessell

Also in attendance: (via ZOOM) Maureen Buffi and Carlo Mencucci

Meeting called to order at 6:30 pm by Pegee Malcolm, chair

- Introduction of November 20, 2019 Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Bob and seconded by Alan to accept the draft minutes. The minutes were unanimously approved.

- Introduction of Washington County Representative

Jeff Burns will be replacing Alex LaForce who resigned for personal reasons. Jeff gave a brief background of his interest in historical cemeteries. He described an accidental discovery of gravestones which turned out to be the burial site of relatives of Thomas Ninigret. After a meeting of Pegee, Charlotte and Alex with John Brown (Narragansett Tribe) it was determined that any inquiries regarding the site shall be directed to John Brown.

- State Legislation vs. Study Commission

Pegee and Lew met with state representative Lauren Carson to discuss action that would promote concerns regarding historical cemeteries. The decision was made to go with legislation. After attempts by the legislative writing consultants failed to create acceptable legislation, RIACHC requested another plan. After a meeting of Rep. Mattiello, RIACHC and Rep. Carson it was ultimately decided that representative Carson (pending re-election) would chair a Study Commission to address issues such as accountability, funding and vandalism. Due to the COVID outbreak all actions were put on hold.

- State Cemetery Annex (CR 107)

In December 2019 Pegee and Walter attended a PAL (Public Archaeology Laboratory) scraping at the former Citizens Bank parking lot in Cranston, the site of the future Topgolf facility. Testing revealed possible former grave shafts which apparently were re-located. Testing on both sides of the parking lot indicated no evidence of existing burials.

Pegee expressed concern that cemetery access be part of the design plan. The Cranston City Planner assured that access will be given although they aren't yet sure how that will look.

- Volunteers

Pegee sent volunteers who were looking for community service hours to Westerly, Woonsocket, Warwick, Cranston, North Smithfield, Smithfield, and to Warren where Judy has plans to meet with a volunteer.

- Perpetual Care

Alan would like to see a fund set up with donated money for the cemeteries in EG not currently maintained by perpetual care funds. He asked for suggestions on how the money would best be managed. Ideas discussed by commissioners included, RI Foundation which requires a minimum of \$10,000 to start, a 501(c)3 which involves paperwork to start and annual follow through, Preserve RI who would act as a fiduciary agent with a fee, or as part of the budget for the EG cemetery commission, or designated to the DPW specifically for cemetery maintenance.

- Historical Cemetery Signs

Commissioners should submit sign requests to Pegee by the November meeting. Joe offered up some extra sign posts which Bob then requested for WG.

- DOT Notifications

Pegee received notification from DOT that overhead work along Post Road was being done that was possibly within 25' of the Lincoln Park Cemetery but it was determined that the work would not impact the cemetery.

The Cranston Cemetery Commission was also notified regarding work near a cemetery along Reservoir Avenue.

Additional Member Comments and Updates - Others have been submitted to Pegee via email

Pegee gave an update on the proposed COSTCO development in Cranston which would impact a historical cemetery on the property. The developer said they had plans to hire PAL who would look for relatives of the interred. Pegee doesn't know if that has happened but that there would be further meetings on the topic.

She also noted that a document discovered by a volunteer shows that there may have been a burial site on the property of the Paine House (now a museum) in Coventry. Research is being done to confirm that.

Marjory gave a report for Little Compton that since the last RIACHC meeting there was less activity, such as workshops, than in a normal year (due to COVID) but 2 community service volunteers cleaned about 30 gravestones. Bob Pratt brought a document with information pertaining to the Almy family cemetery which would be added to the database. A volunteer is trying to place 4 footstones. Marjory wrote a piece for the AGS publication "Markers" about John Stevens an early gravestone carver. She noted that Tiverton's active volunteer group is documenting 2 family burial sites on Wingover Farm where the land is up for sale as a future solar farm.

For Warren, Judy reported that the fence at the North Burial Ground was hit and needs to be repaired. Also, the Mencuccis are working in the James Maxwell lot, fixing and repairing stones. Judy hopes to have volunteers cleaning stones.

Betty reported that back in March a stone found along the power lines was determined to belong in St. Patrick's Cemetery (BU 010). They contacted the church about retrieving and re-setting the stone to its rightful location but it has turned into a long process and Betty isn't yet sure that the stone is back where it belongs.

Alan noted that a revaluation website for EG has plat maps online but cemeteries are not included on the maps. He is pressing the planning department to get the cemeteries with their dimensions on the maps.

Richard Ring reports that the RIHS research center is open, limited to 2 researchers at a time. They are offering an online reference service. Staffers can access the records to answer cemetery-related questions.

Edna reported that on the day of the meeting there were 7 volunteers working for 2 ½ hours in GL 135. Volunteers will return to the site to look for 3 missing stones. There are plans for next weekend to work in a badly neglected cemetery in the Cherry Valley area. There have been 2 ½ to 3 hour long cemetery clean-ups every week since the end of February.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:55 on a motion made by Bob and seconded by Joe.

Respectfully Submitted by Maureen Buffi, Secretary