

Minutes of Meeting April 19, 2023

Location: Babcock-Smith House, Westerly

In attendance: Pegee Malcolm, Debb Suggs, Larry Hunter, Maureen Buffi, Charlotte Taylor, Christine MacWilliams, Caroline Wells, and Betty Mencucci

Excused absences: Judy Fardig, Jim Bessel, Lew Keen, Edna Kent, Richard Ring, David Guiot, Marjorie O'Toole, Jeffrey Burns, and Lynn Rider (replacing Bob Butler)

Also in attendance: Dory Wagner, Carlo Mencucci and Catrina T.

Meeting called to order at 6:40 pm by Pegee Malcolm, chair

- Introduction of November, 2022 Meeting Minutes

It was noted that a form for community service appears at the back of the RIACHC's handbook which can be found on the website. Charlotte made a motion to accept the minutes with the noted correction. Christine seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

- RI Historical Cemetery Awareness & Preservation Weeks

Christine announced that as of the commission meeting 130 cemetery-related events had been scheduled throughout the state with more plans likely to be finalized in the coming weeks.

- Jim sent a reminder that flags can be picked up at the Veterans Cemetery starting May 8 - 12 from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm.
- Lew reported (via email) almost weekly events as part of the Cemetery Awareness weeks.
- Maureen noted that between Coventry and West Warwick the Pawtuxet Valley Preservation & Historical Society's cemetery group has also been active almost weekly with Cemetery Awareness events.
- Larry reported hosting clean-up events, giving talks, and interviewing with a local radio station. He talked about cooperation with the town, especially for town-owned cemeteries. At the end of May a clean-up of the war memorial at Wilcox Park will take place.
- Debb noted that an upcoming tour of Tefft Historical Park will likely be rescheduled due to forecasted rain.
- Caroline mentioned that Warren had a cemetery cleanup scheduled for Sat. April 22 and a walking tour scheduled for Sun. April 23.
- Riverside Cemetery (BU 26) is scheduled for a clean-up. The next event will be a talk about Bathsheba Sherman whose gravestone will be replaced due to recurring vandalism. (Funds were raised to purchase a granite replacement stone.) A gravestone conservation workshop will be held in Pascoag - sign-up is required.
- Christine announced that Woonsocket will be partnering with North Smithfield on May 7 to host a talk and tour of the Quaker meeting house and cemetery followed by a stone restoration class.
- Charlotte will be presenting, at various venues throughout the state, a talk on the desecration of cemeteries over the years to modern day cemetery laws and preservation.
- Pegee announced that there will be 4 clean-ups in Warwick to be advertised in *The Beacon*. On May 7 a presentation will take place at WK 23 about General George Sears Green.
- Dory reported that 5 events are scheduled for Exeter and 2 in Richmond

- FAQs/FYI

Lew submitted updates via email. Noted were:

- Regarding the removal of a cemetery in FAQ #2, add the word, 'Felony'
- Add the words, 'without permission' to FAQ #3 and quote the number of the RIGL
- Regarding rules about visiting burial sites: Add 'Check plat maps to see if a Right-of-Way exists or inquire at Town Hall'. In the event one exists, permission should still be confirmed.
- Regarding rules about being buried in a Historical Cemetery: First it needs to be verified that space exists (there may be burials without markers). Clarify with words, 'owner of lot' or add, 'legal right'.
- Regarding cemeteries containing veterans, people cannot be forced to clean a cemetery even if it contains veteran burials.
- Regarding the responsibilities of commissioners, they are volunteers. They attend quarterly meetings and may organize or participate in activities.

- Community Service Volunteers

Pegee noted that volunteers reported to cemeteries in North Smithfield, Woonsocket, Warren, Warwick, Cranston, and Newport.

Additionally, Pegee noted that the letter formatting used by the RIACHC to sign off the completion of volunteer hours was recently rejected by the DMV. The format has been successfully accepted by courts and agencies mandating community service hours including by the DMV.

- 2023 Meeting Dates

- June 21 (3rd Wed.) Location to be determined
- September 16 (3rd Sat.) Location to be determined
- November 18 (3rd Sat.) Location to be determined

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

Edna reports that the Glocester volunteers have plans to clean cemeteries weekly from now until November. Bill has been working with the town to clean cemeteries with veteran burials.

Richard noted that he has been working with Ancestry to load cemetery related documents. They are in discussion now regarding other documents.

Debb reported that Narragansett has a very active cemetery group. She is hoping to get a cemetery commission started in South Kingstown. The proposed parking lot for South County Hospital was rejected by the Town Council.

Debb also indicated that she could use help installing cemetery signs in North and South Kingstown.

Betty also reported that they have been doing conservation work in BU 100 but due to the extent of vandalized stones they are working to figure out the placement. In addition to raising money for a replacement stone for Bathsheba Sherman, Betty noted that a grave that never had a stone marker will be getting one.

Pegee addressed volunteer comments on the Greater RI Volunteer Facebook page. A new secondary contact was listed in the Cemetery Groups/Associations section of the RIACHC website for Woonsocket.

Also, the search continues for the site of the former Oaklawn School for Girls cemetery. Cadaver dogs detected a couple of potential spots.

Also, Pegee noted that she was contacted by a woman in Wisconsin who was in possession of some Civil War letters sent home from a RI soldier and one from a girlfriend of the soldier. She offered to send photocopies. Pegee offered to distribute transcribed copies of the letter to any interested commissioners.

Dory talked about fire damage to a cemetery in the Queen's River Preserve.

Guest Catrina asked about forming a new cemetery association for the Pine Grove Cemetery in Hopkinton.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:15 pm on a motion made by Charlotte and seconded by Debb.

Respectfully submitted by Maureen Buffi, secretary