

Minutes of Meeting November 18, 2023

Location: Memorial Town Building, North Smithfield

In attendance: Pegee Malcolm, Charlotte Taylor, Christine MacWilliams, Caroline Wells, Richard Ring, Jim Bessel, Debbie Suggs, Lynne Rider, Larry Hunter, and Maureen Buffi

Excused absences: Betty Mencucci, Edna Kent, Judith Fardig, Jeffrey Burns, Marjory O'Toole, Elliott Caldwell, and David Guiot

Also in attendance: Dory Wagner and Robert Boris

- Meeting called to order at 1:07 pm by Pegee Malcolm, chair
- Introduction of September 16, 2023 Meeting Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes. All voted in favor to accept the September 16 meeting minutes as is.

- 2024 Meetings Schedule

- A motion was made and seconded, followed by a unanimous vote to approve a change from 4 commission meetings per year to 3 and to set the meeting dates and location.
- Meeting dates for 2024 were set for February 21, May 15 and October 16.
- Warwick was selected as the regular central location for all 3 meetings.

- RI GIS Website

The GPS coordinates for all historical cemetery locations should be added to the statewide planning department's ARCGIS website. Pegee will try to find the new contact to forward the updated coordinates.

- Cemetery Groups (such as Commissions, Committees and Friend's Groups)

While there is no central authority regarding the formation of cemetery groups, the best practice is for RIACHC commissioners to educate potential groups and their volunteers.

The RIACHC's handbook should be emailed to municipalities for use on their websites. Hard copies should also be available.

Additionally, there is grant money available to create educational training videos for cemetery work such as headstone repair demonstrations.

- Volunteers

Pegee reported sending Community Service volunteers to several locations, including Providence, Cranston, Coventry and Exeter.

Additional Member Comments and Updates – See 'Commissioner Activities' above. Others have been submitted to Pegee via email.

Robert, a guest from Connecticut, explained that he believed that he has an ancestor buried in a Charlestown cemetery which contains many indigenous burials. He was seeking permission to clean a headstone and maintain the cemetery. The Commission referred him to first consult with the town and representatives of the Narragansett tribe.

Caroline noted that North Burial Ground (Warren) is looking good.

Richard reported that the scanning of Old Stone Bank records is currently underway at RIHS.

Larry noted that he has been making contacts within the town (Westerly).

Pegee reported ongoing cleanings in Warwick. She received calls regarding Grace Church cemetery in Providence and Elm Grove cemetery in North Kingstown.

She also reported that Bob and Charlene have been cleaning in West Greenwich when they can.

Also, from Pegee, there was a clean-up event at Cranston #107 (RI Training School) where Dave was participating at the time of the RIACHC meeting. Pegee recommended that everyone should visit the state institution cemeteries.

Debbie noted that Narragansett #10 was nicely cleaned up by a combined effort with the URI Student Veterans Organization (SVO). She was asked about a Quaker cemetery in North Kingstown missing a sign. Debb was checking into reports of a potential native burial ground where kids were said to be hanging out. She also mentioned that she was asked about a Friends cemetery group.

Christine reported clean-ups in Woonsocket at St. James Cemetery on Logee St. and Capron cemetery and in North Smithfield, the Captain Luke Phillips lot was restored. In North Providence the John Hutchinson lot was cleaned and Christine noted a new volunteer was added to the group. The Atwood Harris lot in Johnston was previously off-limits for a lean-up but new property owners have given permission.

In Foster, Lynne noted that weather has caused issues with scheduling clean-ups. Also, she asked the town to incorporate cemeteries onto a checklist when development is considered.

Jim reported that encroachment into Barrington's Tyler Pt. cemetery by a nearby business resulted in GPR and the installation of a fence along the property line. At the Veterans Cemetery in Exeter, the Wreaths Across America is scheduled for Dec. 16 in Sec. E-5, where they left off last year.

Meeting Adjourned at 2:57 pm on a motion made by Jim and seconded by Larry.

Respectfully submitted by Maureen Buffi, secretary