

Minutes of Meeting June 20, 2012

East Greenwich, New England Institute of Technology

In attendance: Pegée Malcolm, Evelyn Wheeler, Henry Duquette, Alan Clarke, Letty Champion, Gayle Waite, Rick Whitesell, Edna Kent, Roger Guillemette, Dory Wagner, Lester Hilton, and Katherine Chansky (representing RIHS).

Excused absences Charlotte Taylor, Judith Fardig, Bob Butler, David Kirchner, and Sally Small

Additional Attendees: Michael Laferriere, Kurt Dion

Meeting called to order at 7:05 pm by Chair Pegée Malcolm

- Introduction of April 18, 2012 Meeting Minutes
Motion to accept minutes was made by Evelyn Wheeler, with a second by Henry Duquette.
Minutes were accepted 12-0.
- A form letter signed by Sheldon Whitehouse was distributed to the commission members for review. The letter asks that anyone assigning community service, such as judges, schools and churches, consider cemetery work as an important community service. Rick Whitesell made a motion and Lester seconded the motion to accept the letter. The letter was approved by members 12-0.
- Discussion on which groups are flagging veteran's graves in each town. There is a need for coordination and documentation of effort. Usually the practice for flagging veteran's graves has been "find a flag, put a flag" but a database would help to ensure that graves are not missed.
- New intern, Kurt Dion who is working with Evelyn, was introduced.
- Update on Website

Michael Laferriere received an e-mail response from Ken Rahn who said he would send files to Michael. If there is a problem doing this Michael says he can get the data from John's database.

- Pegée asked members to think about their goals, noting that she would like to see either a commission, society, or friends group established in each town. By September she would like to know what each town has for a committee, society, organization, etc. Who can answer cemetery questions for that town?
- The office of Sheldon Whitehouse inquired how the commission could present itself to be able to receive and store money. If fundraising were done, who would checks be payable to? The commission discussed that raising funds would likely require an organization, such as Preserve RI or another, to act as a clearinghouse; keeping records, filing taxes, and disbursing funds as needed in exchange for a small administrative fee.

Member Updates/Comments

Edna Kent: Sprague cemetery, part of the Land Trust, is undergoing repairs. FM Global is volunteering for some projects. The next project is Windsor cemetery

Rick Whitesell: Boy Scouts cleaned the Arnold-Vose lot. The Historical Society added daylilies and irises. They are considering having Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) done. An intern from Bryant is recording information from gravestones.

Lester Hilton: Three cemeteries are being cleaned. One had a large tree in it which was removed by a Boy Scout leader. The church donated money to help with expenses. In a Quaker cemetery, a large tree is being removed by someone interested in the wood.

Gayle Waite: In Hopkinton there will be a rededication of a cemetery that the Historical Society cleaned.

Katharine Chansky: Reports that Lee Teverow would like to see the database which is used at the Hope St. Library available at other libraries.

Dory Wagner: Exeter is starting a cemetery committee through the Historical Association. In Westerly she will be meeting with a woman who is researching tuberculosis and Native Americans.

Roger Guillemette: Will get GPS readings to Letty. A high school senior doing a project cleaning the Old Commons Burying Ground cleaned approximately 27-30 stones, front and back, using D-2. The student put together a PowerPoint presentation including "before and after" photos. The Historical Society was pleased with the results and may purchase more D-2.

Letty Champion: In Portsmouth the Boy Scouts cleaned a messy cemetery which now looks good. She had been taking photos in North Kingstown cemeteries but had to take a break in the summer because of leaves. Letty reports that Tiverton has a cemetery commission while Newport, Middletown, and Portsmouth do not.

Alan Clarke: Collecting data in 56 of 85 cemeteries in East Greenwich but the remaining ones are located deep in the woods. Received a phone call from someone near Frenchtown Pond who found a stone dated 1865 in a sluice. It turned out to be a Civil War stone belonging in EX 022. The family replaced that stone at one point and the original later turned up in East Greenwich. The question arose about what can be done with these stones known to be a replacement. Evelyn noted that they may be brought to the Veterans Cemetery in Exeter for recycling

Henry Duquette: In Burrillville a family walking through the woods found a cemetery containing one carved headstone. There is a question about who owns the property. Elsewhere, large pines were removed from a cemetery by an arborist for a small cost. The cemetery committee is getting help from people performing community service. Henry reports good results using D-2. Bases are being built for the cemetery on Howard Ave. In Foster, Ed Robinson and his group are doing great work

Evelyn Wheeler: Veterans cards are done with the exception of some fine tuning and standardizing. She is working with a volunteer experienced in Excel and asked Michael Laferriere if it would be possible to put the spreadsheet online.

Pegee Malcolm: Latest batch of historic cemetery signs from DOT are not ready due to the current workload. The Public Archaeology Lab (PAL) has been finding relatives of people buried in WK 026. Nominations for offices of the RIACHC will take place at the September meeting.

The next meeting will take place the third Wednesday in September (19) and the location will be arranged by Dory Wagner.

Respectfully Submitted by Maureen Buffi, Secretary