

Minutes of Meeting November 15, 2017

Location: Louttit Library, West Greenwich

In attendance: Pegee Malcolm, Bob Butler, Michael Laferriere, Alex LaForce, Russell DiNoto, Dory Wagner, Walter Slocomb, Betty Mencucci, Judy Fardig, and Lew Keene

Excused absences: Alan Clarke, David Bell, Charlotte Taylor, Edna Kent and Jennifer Galpern

Also in attendance: Julie Nathanson, Carlo Mencucci, Colin Parkhurst, and Dave McCarthy

Meeting called to order at 7:06pm by Pegee Malcolm, chair

- Introduction of Draft Meeting Minutes from September 20, 2017

Judy made a motion, seconded by Bob, to accept the Draft Minutes with a correction to a suggestion for a future meeting location which should have been Exeter Library not Hopkinton. The Draft Minutes with the correction were unanimously approved.

- Abandoned Cemetery Issues

There was a discussion of what happens when problem trees in neglected cemeteries cause damage to neighboring properties and what recourse do the abutting property owners have? Colin Parkhurst reported that Cranston is currently investigating the possibility of non-profit funding toward the maintenance of abandon cemeteries.

Could something similar be set up statewide? Betty suggested that historical societies may opt to include a means for members to contribute to funding for a local cemetery committee when paying membership dues. Also, the question was asked if an abandoned cemetery can be purchased.

- Cemetery Adoption

Programs vary throughout the state. There was a discussion of encouraging the periodic maintenance of cemeteries by professional landscapers and tree cutting services. Various incentives such as displaying signage acknowledging their efforts or removal of problem trees in exchange for keeping the wood were mentioned. Russell will be looking into some options for South Kingstown.

- Commission Appointments

Pegee announced that a new person representing Bristol had been appointed but was unable to attend tonight's meeting. Pegee also said there was a new person now handling commission appointments for the state.

In Gloucester, Edna still wishes to serve on the commission but due to various hardships has been unable to attend recent meetings. A suggestion was made to hold the next quarterly meeting in Gloucester if that works for Edna.

- Historic Cemetery Awareness Day

Rep. Giarrusso intends to get a resolution to renew the statewide event for 2018 and submit a bill to get the assembly to make this an annual event.

- 2018 Meeting Dates

The upcoming meeting dates: April 18, June 20, September 19 and November 14. (Please note that

the November date was supposed to be the 21st which falls the day before Thanksgiving so the commissioners unanimously agreed that the meeting should be moved up a week to the 14th.)

Also, the intent is to continue to balance the meeting locations between West Bay and East Bay. If a meeting location is available in Gloucester in April then the location schedule might be West Bay, East Bay, East Bay, West Bay.

- Historic Cemetery Signs

Pegee received a request for signs for Barrington. She will attempt to place another order but her contact with the state sign shop was on vacation. Also, she noted that someone had turned in a sign, which she now has in her garage, for LN 055.

- Tax Abatement RIGL 44-3-63

Alex reported that Westerly approved a tax abatement ordinance but doesn't yet know the details. Betty was asked about some specifics of the Burrillville program and she explained that photographic proof of cemetery maintenance must be provided each year. Pegee reported that as of this time only 3 or 4 towns have passed a tax abatement ordinance.

- Governor's Medallions

Judy reports that Rep. Kenneth Marshall and Sen. Walter Felag are working on legislation to ensure that the RI governor burials after 1955 also receive the graveside medallions and that all future burials of governors will receive them.

Additional Member Comments – Other Updates have been submitted to Pegee via email Michael reported that he met with the caretaker at Oak Hill Cemetery (WO 007) in Woonsocket and the flags are now sorted and properly stored.

Colin Parkhurst reported that the Cranston Commission just held a successful cleanup at Oakland Cemetery (CR 003). He said Cranston will take on a more active role there and will work with volunteers who are interested in coming back. Pegee said that originally the cemetery was thought to be part of Providence and there had been issues over who was responsible. The mausoleum is a separate issue.

It was mentioned that former commission members Evelyn Wheeler, Letty Champion, Rick Whitesell, and Roger Guillemette were still interested in RIACHC issues and they wished to be kept informed. Dory asked about providing them with the minutes.

Betty recommended that commissioners consider getting involved with American Gravestone Studies (AGS) and consider attending the annual conference in Danbury, CT this summer.

Edna requested that the local numbering system for cemeteries in Gloucester be cross-referenced to the current statewide RI Historical Cemetery numbering which is also used in Gloucester. Michael asked to have her send him the list and he would find a way to cross-reference it in the database. Also Edna noted someone reported a possible unidentified cemetery in Gloucester but she hadn't yet seen it.

Meeting adjourned at 8:28pm on a motion by Bob, seconded by Judy.

Respectfully Submitted by Maureen Buffi, Secretary