

Minutes of Meeting November 16, 2016

Location: Warren Town Hall

In attendance: Pegee Malcolm, Alex LaForge, Michael Laferriere, Edna Kent, Betty Mencucci, Judy Fardig, Walter Slocomb, Bob Butler, Evelyn Wheeler (via phone), Cara Condit, and Lew Keen.

Excused absences: Dory Wagner, Alan Clarke, Charlotte Taylor, and Jennifer Galpern

Also in attendance: Ann Tait (AGS), Charlene Butler, and Carlo Mencucci

Meeting called to order at 7:02pm by Pegee Malcolm, chair

- Introduction of Draft Meeting Minutes from September 21, 2016

Bob made a motion, seconded by Alex, to accept the Draft Minutes with a correction to add Judy Fardig's name to the list of excused absences. The Draft Minutes were unanimously approved.

- AGS Oakley Award

Ann Tait, Secretary of the Board of Trustees for the Association of Gravestone Studies (AGS), presented a corrected plaque to the Mencuccis awarding them for their gravestone preservation efforts. The Mencuccis received the Oakley award at the 2016 national conference in Cincinnati.

- Report from Betty

In BU 026 the gravestone for Bathsheba Sherman, a heavily visited site, had been vandalized and then repaired. It was then broken again so Betty removed the stone to re-repair it. She left a sign explaining why the stone was missing and asking for donations to repair it.

Betty would like to create guidelines for headstone repair, sharing what she and Carlo have learned along with links to how-to's on AGS in hopes of preventing poor repairs. She asked about adding them to the commission's website, possibly with a list of recommended supplies for making repairs. The Mencuccis also have prepared a training DVD.

She also suggested making a change to the "Helpful Hints" section on the website where the recommendation is to only cut back brush between October and January. The hint also states not to cut brush in the spring because it will multiply. However, some brush can re-grow later no matter when cut and Betty is afraid this advice will discourage people from clearing cemeteries.

- Airport Cemetery Update

The creation of the "new cemetery" (markers only) is underway. An informational panel will explain the move. By December, the new flat markers for the airport cemetery should be complete. Research is being done on a stone which has initials only.

- Website Update

Michael said there wasn't much to report but said that the database's "Current Comments" section won't change but he would like to find a way to be able to add and update information.

He asked Evelyn to have Greg Bonyng send him the list of all cemeteries, not just those confirmed, because on the map option to export, he was only seeing 2,000 cemeteries, short about 700.

- Cemetery Day

Pegee will contact Representative Giarusso about proposing this event to the state assembly again. She suggested people write letters urging support for this. It was noted that the 3rd Saturday of April is always the date of the annual Historic Preservation Conference. Maybe the 4th Saturday in April annually could be designated Historic Cemetery Appreciation Day.

- Tax Abatement Update

(Evelyn via phone) She has visited 24 city/town meetings with more to visit. As of this date only two (Richmond and Warwick) had outright rejected the idea. Lincoln and Narragansett were very receptive and David Bell said that Tiverton had put it on their meeting agenda. In Burrillville, it is still being reviewed and Betty will follow up.

- Introduction of New Commissioners

Cara Condit will be replacing Jonathan Rascoe as representative for RI Veterans Cemetery. Lew Keen will replace Roger Guillemette as representative for Newport County.

Additional Member Comments – Other Updates have been submitted to Pegee via email

Lew received a call from a woman in Pennsylvania who found a gravestone she thought belonged in Rhode Island. It turned out that the stone for William Mumford did belong in Newport. Bob and Charlene were able to pick up the stone in Pennsylvania and return it to Rhode Island. Two additional stones found in a basement also belonged in Newport. All three stones were reset and a ceremony was held.

Edna reported that GL 038 on Snake Hill Rd, an obscure lot with mostly field stones, will be taken on as an Eagle Scout project. She also received a call from FM Global concerning GL 005. Upon visiting the site Edna saw that only 8 stones were in proper position, the rest were either broken or leaning against the wall. She doesn't know if the company would be willing to finance the repairs. A "new" cemetery was found on Elmdale Road on the old Colwell farm but Edna had not been able to visit yet. She also took a call from someone concerned about rights of access to a cemetery. Without an easement, the person must gain permission from the property owner. A proposed private drive for a new house on Pine Orchard Road would pass very close to a cemetery. The building inspector is aware.

Evelyn followed up on an earlier item regarding a proposed Air Force monument in the RI Veterans Cemetery. GPR found that there was not a cemetery in that location and the Air Force Korean War monument will be installed in the spring.

Mike noted that Rhode Island erected a monument in Andersonville, Georgia. He asked Cara if a monument can be erected in the RI Veterans Cemetery honoring Rhode Islanders who died at Andersonville but she didn't know.

Pegee took a call from a woman whose father was a Vietnam veteran buried in RI 001 according to the database but her inquiry to the RI Veterans Cemetery did not show a record of him there. Also, Pegee reported that she had some volunteers who were brothers completing community service in Cranston.

Betty reported that in Burrillville they were getting good results with court-ordered volunteers.

The next meeting will be April 19, 2017. There is an offer to meet at the RI Historical Society Library on Hope St. in Providence. Pegee proposed meeting there in April and then discussing the upcoming June 21, September 20, and November 15 meeting locations.

Meeting adjourned at 8:24pm on a motion by Bob, seconded by Judy.

Respectfully Submitted by Maureen Buffi, Secretary