

Minutes of Meeting April 16, 2014

Location: Johnston Historical Society, 101 Putnam Pike, Johnston

In attendance: Pegee Malcolm, Roger Guillemette, Michael Laferriere, Henry Duquette, Edna Kent, Charlotte Taylor, Judith Fardig, Evelyn Wheeler, Rick Whitesell, Sally Small, Dory Wagner, Alan Clarke, David Bell, Tom O'Connell, and Jonathan Rascoe.

Excused absences: Bob Butler, Kristen from RIHS LIBRARY

Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm by Chair Pegee Malcolm

- Introduction of Draft Meeting Minutes from November 20, 2013

On a motion made by Roger, seconded by Michael, the commission voted unanimously to approve the draft minutes, with an amendment to Bob Butler's update for West Greenwich.

- Update on Historic Cemetery Signs

DOT notified Pegee that the most recent order for signs was complete. Not all of the signs ordered were made. Requests for missing signs should be sent to Pegee for re-submittal to DOT. Pegee will ask DOT if it is possible for signs to be made without pre-printed numbers to allow for the flexibility of numbering as needed.

- Update on GPS

Greg at URI will be available to resume the cemetery GPS project after May 1. In the meanwhile, volunteers in Foster continue to get readings and take pictures. Cemetery status on the ARCGIS has been updated.

- Care of Veterans Graves

Pegee, Jonathan, and Henry met with Karen Bradbury of Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse's office to see what could be done to get veteran's graves cared for. Legislation created in 1928 and in the 1950's enables this care but there is no money available.

- Church Parking in North Kingstown

Evelyn met on April 16 with a deacon from the church who stated that there are 8 burials in the lot and that cars park far away from any graves. Evelyn has a contact with the Dept. of Agriculture to get a Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) reading, to which the church agreed. Copies of a letter written by the church, commenting on the history and facts related to the site were distributed.

- Pegee received a call from a man working with DCYF and the Boys' Training School who is trying to get the residents a cemetery cleaning project, maybe in Cranston or Providence. He hopes to get funding from DCYF and grants to purchase tools. Some member suggestions included state property cemeteries, state farm annex, Big River cemeteries, and using GIS to do an overlay of cemeteries on state owned properties.

- Pegee was considering asking the state for approval for a “floater” or “alternate” for the commission. This would require a change in the RIGL. Judy made a motion to expand the commission to “2 at-large” members but withdrew the motion for further discussion.

Member Updates/Comments

Alan: All 5 positions on the EG commission have been filled. They received a donated tractor and acquired a trailer for transporting equipment. Town clerk found an old ordinance which states that EG is responsible for care of the town’s historical cemeteries. The town commission will take over organizing cleanups. Alan will continue obtaining GPS readings and pictures.

David Bell: Tiverton had its first cleanup of the season in TV 034. A cleanup volunteer sent by Pegee is willing to help more.

Roger: An Eagle Scout is ready to install signs and got permission for a private lot. Town tax assessor is identifying cemeteries on assessor’s map to confirm ownership. The town missed one of the cemeteries containing a veteran’s grave and will take responsibility to keep it clean on a regular basis.

Mike: He is maintaining the state commission’s website and the Facebook posting is still popular, reaching many people and organizations outside RI. John Sterling sends him the updates for the database. At this time, the website, rihistoriccemeteries.org has the most up-to-date database.

Jonathan: Received a call from a woman in Maryland whose father, a veteran, is buried in Oakland cemetery in Cranston but has no headstone after 2 years. A veteran’s stone was delivered but not installed. Jonathan was trying to help determine the location of the missing stone but calls to the office remain unanswered. Henry plans to visit the cemetery for flagging and will ask the owner or caretaker if he sees them.

Henry: The Mencuccis attended a 3 day seminar in Niagara Falls on gravestone restoration. Henry and the Mencuccis will install cemetery signs. There are 4 or 5 cemeteries targeted for cleaning.

Edna: An Eagle Scout is still working on the Wilmarth cemetery. GPS in Glocester is ongoing. She found a field-stone on land-trust property but isn’t sure if it’s a cemetery. A man from Oregon called about a very overgrown cemetery full of bull briar, almost impenetrable, having about 4 – 6 graves.

Charlotte: She will be talking at a Town Clerks quarterly meeting and is looking to pass along any cemetery-related topics that would be of concern. She will email details of an upcoming public lecture about the archaeological site of the battle of Nipsachuck.

Tom: In Westerly they are getting ready to get back to taking GPS readings.

Judy: On Saturday volunteers cleaned up the North Burial Ground in Warren in advance of Earth Day. The gate will be re-installed in North Burial Ground.

Evelyn: A cemetery that she reported on previously turned out to be in Richmond. It contains 4 rows of fieldstones, some inscribed with initials. She will use the database to try to determine which cemetery

it is. She would like to give an updated cemetery contact list in packets to Charlotte for distribution at the Town Clerks quarterly meeting.

Sally: She asked if there was a link to RIGL on the state website. The assessor in Barrington wants to know which symbol should represent cemeteries appearing on the plat map. Sally suggested that there be an official recognition or certificate of appreciation from either the commission or the governor's office for Scouts and other youth groups for their work in cleaning cemeteries.

Rick: Asked if there was follow-up on the letters sent to cities and towns about RIGL 44-3-63. Last Saturday the Bartlett lot in Woonsocket was cleaned by students from Mt. St. Charles.

Dory: The town of Richmond contacted her to ask how many citizens would be affected by RIGL 44-3-63. She has cemetery signs at her house. There is a monthly cleanup schedule with 5 people per cleanup. Gail Waite and Lori have been working on a Richmond cemetery book.

Pegee: PAL was at the airport cemetery measuring headstones to determine how to angle and enclose stones. The obelisk is in 5 pieces, making it easier to take down. The Warwick Commission believes they have found the oldest cemetery in Warwick to date back to 1659. The Westcott family has turned over some old drawings to the Warwick Historical Society, prompting an examination of records, old maps, and tax forms.. This will be WK 165, the Stukely Westcott Lot. .

The next meeting will be June 18th in Little Compton.

Tom made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Charlotte. Meeting adjourned at 9:15pm

Respectfully Submitted by Maureen Buffi, secretary