

## Minutes of Meeting February 21, 2024

Location: Warwick City Hall Annex

In attendance: Pegee Malcolm, Debb Suggs, Charlotte Taylor, Elliott Caldwell (replacing Lew Keen), Betty Mencucci, Richard Ring, Jim Bessel, Larry Hunter, Lynne Rider, Larry Hunter, Judy Fardig, David Guiot, Christine MacWilliams and Maureen Buffi

Excused absences: Jeffrey Burns, Marjory O'Toole, Caroline Wells

Also in attendance: Dory Wagner and Carlo Mencucci

- Meeting called to order at 6:33 pm by Pegee Malcolm, chair
- Introduction of November 16, 2023 Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Charlotte and seconded by Christine to accept the minutes. All voted in favor to accept the November 16, 2023 meeting minutes as is.

- Historical Cemetery Signs

There will be an opportunity to order signs and posts through RI DOT. Sign orders should be turned into Pegee by March 15. Post sizes of 6' or 8' may be requested.

- Rights-of-Way

Betty reported issues with some cemeteries in Burrillville where developers changed existing rights-of-way. She is currently requesting DEM to correct a right-of-way to one cemetery so that access is practical. It was asked if RIACHC can suggest rules for Rights-of-Way. Charlotte will write an advisory letter to send to town planning departments.

- Damage to TV #5 and WK #34

In Warwick, a Judicial Assistance Group is attempting to collect funds from a driver who caused damage to historical cemetery #34. In Tiverton, Pegee alerted the town to damages to a wall in historical cemetery #5 but the work has yet to be done.

- Repository for Headstone Fragments

A proposal from John Sterling to create a repository for gravestone fragments was discussed to get the opinion of the Commission with a vote. Larry made a motion which was seconded by Judy and a vote was taken. The creation of a central storage system was rejected unanimously.

- Photos

Photos from the RIACHC's database may be used on other websites as long as credit is given to the source of the photos.

- Neighborhood Complaints

The neighbor can take responsibility to cut branches hanging over into their yard from cemeteries as the Commission (RIACHC) can't assume liability.

- Charlestown Cemetery Update

A Mystic, CT resident with a connection to a Charlestown cemetery (with indigenous burials) contacted Loren Spears and John Brown about his interest in maintaining and cleaning his ancestor's headstone. The Commission has not heard from him for a follow-up.

- Cemetery Weeks
  - Christine announced that she was posting the events on the website calendar by community and event dates.
  - Pegee said she is hoping to give out "Cemetery Event" signs to place on-site at clean-up locations at the time of the events.

Additional Member Comments and Updates – Others have been submitted to Pegee via email.

Richard reported that Ancestry is scanning documents at RIHS. Also, the Old Stone Bank records are still being worked on. The RUHS will be going to Williamsburg to attend a committee meeting for the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary preparations.

Jim notes that Barrington cemeteries are in good shape. At the Veterans cemetery, more columbarium walls are under construction.

In Westerly, Larry was given access to private property to clean a cemetery in the woods and permission for 2 others. There are 2 events planned in Westerly for Cemetery Awareness Weeks.

David gave an update on the clean-up of the Training School Cemetery (CR #107), saying it was a good first pass. Students and inmates worked with the assistance of Hattoy's Nursery & Landscaping. There has been a change in the management of Oakland Cemetery in Cranston and the RI Foundation is now involved. A Cemetery Awareness event will be held in partnership with PAL at the Cranston Public Library to discuss the history of the State Training School Cemetery. Pegee would like to see the signs for the state institution cemeteries separated as right now several are lined up.

Judy reported that she is waiting for stone repairs to be done in Warren. Buried gravestones were found while work was being done at a cemetery on Serpentine Rd. Also, grant money was received from Massasoit Historical Society.

(Per Pegee) In West Greenwich, Bob and Charlene will start cleaning again. Pegee also sent a volunteer to W.G.

Pegee reported that in addition to dealing with the cemetery wall repair in Warwick, she will be scheduling a clean-up event at Brayton Cemetery for Cemetery Awareness Weeks. In the past she hosted scavenger hunts and an event at the George Sears Greene cemetery.

Maureen reported that in Coventry she had been working with student volunteers in Maple Root Cemetery through the winter and would be winding down when their NHS hours were due in mid-March. The PVPHS Cemetery Group was offered to set up a display at the case at Coventry Public Library. This year's focus was on gravestone symbolism. She ran a Power Point Presentation on the needs of Coventry's historical cemeteries to the Coventry Historic Preservation Commission in preparation for a presentation to the Town Council. Upcoming Cemetery Awareness events will represent Coventry and West Warwick.

Additionally, Pegee announced that if anyone needed a volunteer, someone in Providence, willing to drive anywhere, was looking for 10 hours by the following week. She also stated that a Probation Office has discovered the Commission's ads for cemetery volunteers as a volunteer option

Lynne stated that in Foster, there was no funding for cemetery work and no support from the town. She was working to get the town to revamp their ordinances to conform with state regulations regarding confirmation that no burials existing outside cemetery boundaries (when nearby development may

encroach). The ordinance passed, but not unanimously. She plans to clean a couple cemeteries on Plainfield Pike and hopes to clean up and mark off one on the golf course.

Debb noted there had been a cleanup of Narragansett #10 back in November. A student veterans' organization and Girl Scouts flagged graves. A Friends of South Kingstown Cemeteries and Memorials want to do lots of projects. The Queen's River Baptist Church Cemetery was cleaned by a local farm. There will be a clean-up by Wickford Middle School for the cemetery at Ryan Park.

Dory reports Boy Scouts are starting projects and lots of requests from people looking for community service. Active committees in Richmond and Exeter have scheduled dates for participation in Cemetery Awareness Weeks. There will also be a public event for the flagging of graves.

Christine reported that students from Lincoln High School are working in a cemetery and community service people are also volunteering.

Per Charlotte, Block Island will host their Cemetery Awareness events in the fall because the spring is too cold. Charlotte noted that there are women who are looking to do research on Black burials and are trying to get funds for GPR.

Elliott wants to put up signs at about 8 different cemeteries but waiting for proof-reading by committee to approve. They are also looking to restore St. Mary's Cemetery which is need of TLC. Also, they will be needing help with a brownstone wall. She will inquire as to what is happening with TV #5.

Betty noted that a group, Women of the Wilderness who wanted a cemetery tour will do a cemetery clean-up in the spring. She reported that an orchard owner near a Burrillville cemetery with active burials dug along the granite post and removed soil. Charlotte will be in contact with that person via letter. The Burrillville cemetery fund will be used to help pay for some tree removal at a local cemetery. Local Girl Scouts have been active doing cemetery clean-ups. A neighbor of a cemetery wrote about some of the deceased. Cemetery Awareness Weeks for Burrillville are TBD.

The May 15 meeting will be held at the Warwick Town Hall Annex at 6:30 pm. Meet at the foyer.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:17 pm on a motion made by Jim and seconded by Betty.

Respectfully submitted by Maureen Buffi, secretary