

Minutes of Meeting June 15, 2022

Location: Veterans Cemetery, Exeter

In attendance: Pegee Malcolm, Jim Bessel, Debbie Suggs, Lew Keen, Richard Ring, Caroline Wells, Charlotte Taylor, Larry Hunter, Betty Mencucci, Jeffrey Burns

Also in attendance: David Guiot, Sarah Zurier, Carlo Mencucci, Jeff Nigrelli, and Maureen Buffi, secretary

Excused absences: Christine MacWilliams, Marjorie O'Toole, Judy Fardig, Bob Butler, and Edna Kent

Meeting called to order at 6:35 pm by Pegee Malcolm, chair

- Commission Member

It was announced that Walter Slocomb who represented Providence Co. passed away on April 26.

- Introduction of April 20, 2022 meeting minutes

Charlotte made a motion to accept the minutes and Lew seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously accepted.

- RI DOT Projects

Pegee was contacted by DOT about 2 projects in need of letters of 'No Objection':

- Regarding a project near WK #22, Jim made a motion and Larry seconded it to vote for a letter of 'No Objection'. The letter was unanimously approved.
- Regarding the retaining wall project in front of Acotes Hill (GL #23), Debbie made a motion which was seconded by Jeffrey. All were in favor of a letter of 'No Objection'

- Historical Cemetery Signs

Old signs to be disposed of should be marked as having been replaced. The city or town should be notified.

- Review of Perpetual Care Funds Bill H7376

Lew gave a brief review of the history of the bill for the benefit of new commissioners:

- The bill started in response to concerns for how perpetual care funds were being used (or not) at two locations.
- Introduced in 2021 to require that an annual report be generated for every cemetery with perpetual care, the bill died in committee.
- Re-introduced to require a report only be generated upon request, the bill was pulled after the RI Cemetery Association objected.
- The Association invited Pegee, Lew and Rep. Lauren Carson to attend their annual meeting.
- It was recommended that a document for the public be drafted stating what to do if there is a problem with Perpetual Care at a cemetery.

- Burial of Champlin Remains

Pegee, Charlotte and Tim Ives attended a funeral for the remains found in storage at URI by an

intern. The remains were brought to a cemetery in Perryville where other Champlins are buried. Pegee was contacted about other possible remains at URI.

Also, other remains thought to belong in Cranston, are still awaiting burial.

- Queens Fort, Exeter

A neighbor gave notice about a possible cemetery which has no sign and doesn't appear to be on any map. Charlotte emphasized minimal disturbance and recommended GPR first and secondly removal of top layer of soil to see if a grave shaft exists. She will show Richard and Pegee the site. Richard noted that RIHS is examining properties in South County to determine ownership.

- Upcoming Meetings

- September 24th (Sat.) Burrillville Historical Society at 16 Laurel Hill Ave. Anyone wishing to arrive by 1 pm can tour the first cemetery the Mencuccis worked on.
- November meeting to be held in East Bay. Location and date TBD.

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

Betty received a call from a woman with the top half of a gravestone on her property. Her neighbor had a similar piece. Neither wanted the stone on their property. What can be done with discarded stones?

Sarah reported that there were almost 100 cemetery events, all free. She shared results of a survey of participants and noted she would like to see the event happen again next year.

Pegee reported:

- She was able to obtain a headstone for a Civil War soldier who never had a headstone.
- Pegee received a complaint about Newport Memorial Park Cemetery (MT #17). Lew noted that he heard that the parent company had gone bankrupt and sometimes complaints surface.
- A volunteer in South Kingstown who needs 10 hours will be sent to do string trimming.
- Judy picked up donated D-2 from Westport and divided it up for any interested commissioners. A discount of 25% off the purchase of a case of 4 has been offered to the commission.
- Pegee received a complaint from someone about North Burial Ground who wants a damaged headstone replaced but was told she had to be the next-of-kin to qualify for replacement.
- A Stafford Family Association looking for the burial location of a Thomas Stafford from the 1600s is questioning if a fieldstone in WK #53 belongs to him.
- She received a thank-you note for representing RIACHC at the Champlin funeral service.
- Bob will be replaced on RIACHC as he's no longer representing League of Cities and Towns

Debbie suggested including historical cemeteries in the America 250 celebration event. Sarah agreed that a program about Revolutionary War soldiers and their graves would be an excellent addition.

Larry announced that the SAR sent 3 bronze flag holders and that he was planning a June 25 event. He also noted the Atlas Preservation event to be held in North Smithfield in July.

Jim is trying to get RI DOH to relay veteran status info so he can add their burial locations to his database.

Pegee asked the commissioners to update their contact info on the website.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:12 pm on a motion made by Charlotte and seconded by Debbie.

Respectfully submitted by Maureen Buffi, secretary