

Historic Cemetery Commission Minutes  
Town Hall, Conference Room B  
February 4, 2014  
6:00 p.m.

Members Present: Mary Louise Formisano, Jason Beaumier, Gene Dumas, Deron Murphy and Chris Feisthamel (arrived at 6:55).

Others Present: Alan Clarke and Bruce MacGunnigle

Staff present: Lea Anthony Hitchen, Assistant Town Planner

### **Introductions**

Ms. Hitchen welcomed the Commission members and thanked them for volunteering their time for what should be a rewarding experience.

Mr. MacGunnigle, a town resident, historian, genealogist, and author of “East Greenwich, Rhode Island Historical Cemetery Inscriptions,” suggested the new commission focus their time on rallying for community awareness. In his opinion E.G. Cemetery #18, located behind Briarbrook Farms off of South County Trail, is probably the most significant in terms of people who are buried there (Tillinghast family) and could be better maintained. Mr. MacGunnigle asserted that while he does not have a formal position on the Commission he is always available when needed. (Mr. MacGunnigle left at 6:30.)

Each HCC member present (Mr. Murphy, Mr. Beaumier, Mr. Dumas and Ms. Formisano) formally introduced themselves, summarized their interests and what they can each bring to the Commission.

### **Discussion with Alan Clarke**

Mr. Clarke, the East Greenwich representative to the RI Historical Cemetery Commission, and who assisted getting the municipal cemetery commission ordinance approved, acknowledged his vast interest with cemeteries,

distributed the “Cemetery Bible” which he had emailed Commission members, has visited all but 2 East Greenwich cemeteries, and confirmed that he will help advise this Commission and be the bridge between the State until the Commission feels everything can be handled without him.

Mr. Clarke noted that he would eventually like to see all stones properly standing up and fixed as well as general maintenance given to each cemetery (i.e. mowing, maintain brush, etc.). He advised that this requires good oversight on the Commission’s part and time seeking volunteers; he added that being part of the Cemetery Commission can be a fascinating job if you enjoy history. Mr. Clarke recommended that the winter time is the best time of year to clean cemeteries due to briars, prickles, vegetative overgrowth being at a minimum.

Mr. Clarke recommended visiting the [rihistoriccemeteries.org](http://rihistoriccemeteries.org), the State Cemeteries Commission webpage for great information. He also noted that he can obtain free 30”x18” cemetery signs which are put together by RIDOT in case a cemetery needs/missing an identification sign.

The HCC embraced the idea of soliciting volunteers and rallying the community; they would like to move forward on getting the word out by any and every means possible – social media, Planning E-News, town website, newspaper articles, public service announcements; business cards for each commission member supplied by Mr. Clarke.

Mr. Murphy passed out a bulleted list of goals and objectives for the HCC noting the following: establish a mission statement; visitation and identification of cemeteries; determination of what needs to be done for each cemetery; solicit volunteers; funding; trash/material removal; tools; communication to the public.

As for soliciting volunteers, the HCC suggested families and local businesses “Adopt A Cemetery,” contacting the Scouts (Cub, Girl and Boy), student groups, religious organizations and veterans groups, etc.

Considering the overgrown cemeteries are prone to bees, yellow jackets, ticks, poison ivy and sumac, etc. the HCC should prepare a waiver, especially for children under a certain age. The HCC should also put together a “How to Dress” for cleaning events; Save the Bay website is a good resource on how to dress.

### **Election of Officers – Chair and Vice-Chair**

According to the HCC ordinance, the Commission shall annually elect a Chair and Vice-Chair. For the slate of officers Mr. Feisthamel motioned to nominate Mr. Murphy for Chair and Ms. Formisano for Vice-Chair for a one-year term. Seconded by Ms. Formisano.

In support of the motion, it was noted Mr. Murphy clearly has the strong background and leadership skills to hold the Chair position.

VOTE: 5 – 0.

### **2014 Meeting Schedule**

The Commission unanimously agreed the first Tuesday of every month would be the meeting schedule until further notice. Meetings will start at 6 pm and be held in Conference Room B.

In order to have a plan for the next meeting Mr. Clarke will organize a rating/grading system of each cemetery; recommend which cemeteries are suitable for certain age levels/skill sets.

The HCC will start preparing a public service announcement and letter to send out to potential volunteers.

Members will provide a list of potential contacts within their niche and circle of acquaintances.

Ms. Hitchen will provide a list of private homeowners who have a cemetery located on their property. She will research potential equipment that is available for cleanups from the DPW and Parks and Recreation Departments.

Mr. Feisthamel noted the Warwick Cemetery Commission has a \$450 budget per year; the HCC queried if a \$500 budget line item was possible with money going towards food and coffee at cleanups, bags, tools, etc. Ms. Hitchen would discuss with the Planning Director and Town Manager if this was possible.

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The next meeting will take place on **March 4, 2014 at 6:00 pm.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.