

Historic Cemetery Commission Minutes
Town Hall, Conference Room B
June 2, 2015
6:00 p.m.

Members Present: Deron Murphy (Chair), Mary Louise Formisano (Vice-Chair), Jason Beaumier, and Gene Dumas.

Members Absent: Chris Feisthamel.

Others Present: Alan Clarke.

Staff present: Lea Anthony Hitchen, Assistant Town Planner

Approval of Minutes – May 5, 2015

Motion by Mr. Beaumier to approve the May 5, 2015 minutes as written.
Seconded by Mr. Dumas. Approved 4-0.

June 20th Cemetery Cleanup

The Commissioners verified they would be restoring Cemeteries 4 and 10, located next to one another in the Crystal Creek neighborhood off of McPartland Way. Ms. Hitchen noted she sent an invitation to all residents in the subdivision notifying them of the cleanup. Ms. Formisano advised she has 19 volunteers signed up for the event including the resident who lives next door to the cemeteries. The Commissioners decided it would be best logistically for the volunteers to meet at the location event.

Purchase of Leaf Blower on Wheels

Table for next meeting.

Recommendation of Eagle Scout project for Isaac Pontarelli

The Commissioners and Mr. Clarke reviewed several cemeteries that Mr. Pontarelli could restore; they narrowed down the list to Cemeteries 17, 35, 40 and 54 as possible projects. Mr. Murphy and Ms. Formisano would reach out to Mr. Pontarelli to help him get started.

State Cemetery Advisory Representative Report

Mr. Clarke updated the Commission about Cemetery #59, the Samuel Gardiner lot which sits on private property but the cemetery was deeded to the East Greenwich Preservation Society – under all accounts it appears the EGPS does not maintain it and ownership is just a formality. Mr. Clarke he talked to the owners of the property as they are requesting a tree be removed as it will damage the cemetery if it falls. He explained the tree is a distance from the cemetery but likely will break some of the gravestones if it were to come down. The owners have said they can remove the tree themselves but cannot guarantee that their removal will not affect the gravestones. Mr. Clarke provided pictures of the subject lot to show the tree relative to the cemetery noting the cemetery sign is turned away from the road and was positioned that way before the present owners purchased the house. One branch of the offending tree has already been removed while decay can be seen on the branch needing to come down.

The Commissioners agreed that although the homeowner is not under any obligation to remove the tree it was highly recommended that the tree be removed by a professional tree service. The HCC simply does not have the funding to help private homeowners at this time to remove the tree. It was also suggested the owner contact the EG Preservation Society. Ms. Formisano volunteered to draft a letter to the homeowner.

Mr. Clarke noted he has received 8 new signs to install. He also asserted he will be easing out of the HCC over the year and will be donating all of his equipment to this Commission.

Staff Report

Ms. Hitchen noted there was email correspondence received from Mr. Sean McMullen who owns property at 31 Cindyann Drive which is also where Cemetery 22 is located and where the HCC held a cleanup last spring. He was concerned that several trees were removed from the interior of the cemetery and left outside the cemetery walls on his property; he assumed the volunteers

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would return to remove all the trees they cut down. Those present at this particular cleanup remember existing piles of trees which appeared to be left behind from a utility crew. Mr. Murphy recalled that when the trees in the cemetery were cut they were added to other trees that had been taken down and placed in a much wooded location and not directly on a lawn. Mr. Murphy volunteered to contact Mr. McMullen, walk through the property with him and remove anything the Cemetery Commission left behind. Mr. Murphy this issue raises a good point about the Commission and its volunteers going onto private property to restore a cemetery and the need to have guidelines in order to do so.

Ms. Hitchen noted she will have more time during the summer months to start creating the HCC Facebook page as the Planning Department will be getting an additional staff person.

Staff also read a letter from town resident, Nancy Phillips who has deep roots in town and thanked the Historic Cemetery Commission for the incredible restoration work on cemeteries 13, 23, 24 and 25.

Public Comment

No public comment.

The Commission members unanimously decided to cancel the July 7th HCC meeting. The next scheduled meeting will be held on August 4, 2015 at 6 PM.

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Beaumier, seconded by Mr. Dumas. Approved 4-0.

Meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm.