

Historic Cemetery Commission Minutes
Town Hall, Conference Room B
November 3, 2015
6:00 p.m.

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

Others Present: Alan Clarke.

Staff present: Lea Anthony Hitchen, Assistant Town Planner

Presentation of Donation from VFW Members

Quartermaster Alan Beaumier and Commander Rodney Leighton from VFW Post 8018 kindly donated \$400.00 to the Commission's ongoing restoration efforts. Quartermaster Beaumier and Commander Leighton presented the Commission with the check. Chair Murphy indicated the money would be put towards purchasing a pullerbear.

Discussion of Eagle Scout Projects

Mr. Kendall Soares of E.G. Boy Scout Troop #1 was present again with his mother, Kathleen Soares, to confirm his Eagle Scout project with the Cemetery Commission. Mr. Soares noted his project to finish restoring Cemetery #18 has been approved by his troop leader. Since Mr. Soares plans to restore Cemetery #18 on November 14th, the same day as a scheduled cemetery cleanup, he and his scout members will focus cleaning on the right half of the cemetery while the other volunteers work on the left side. His focus will be to clean out the brush – to be pushed over the stone wall which has already been approved by the property owner; pull out saplings; remove briars; level and prepare the area to be seeded come spring. Mr. Murphy suggested taking before and after photos for proper documentation. A rain date was set for November 15th.

Discussion with Alfred Timperly was tabled since he was not present. Mr. Murphy commented that he would attempt to contact him.

Presentation of Pullerbear

A jovial and excited Mr. Dumas presented the newest piece of equipment, the pullerbear! He explained the pullerbear is made in Canada, can clamp onto saplings up to 3” in diameter and pull them out of the ground with ease. Mr. Dumas demonstrated how to use the pullerbear on Mr. Beaumier also noting there is no maintenance involved and is very easy to store.

Recap of October 24th Cleanups

Mr. Feisthamel asserted the cleanup at Cemetery #72 along Division Road went great partly due to Mr. Dave Imbruglia. He commented by the time the cleanup was complete Cemetery #72 was in pristine condition and an additional four stones were uncovered and five stones were righted upwards. Mr. Feisthamel noted he has a new appreciation for Cemetery #72.

Mr. Murphy summarized the cleanup efforts that took place at Cemetery #40 located off of South County Trail. He noted both Mr. Dumas and himself along with 20 URI student volunteers worked over 2.5 hours to clear out debris and filled about 50 lawn bags with brush, leaves and sticks and even uncovered several stones that had obviously been buried for quite some time. The students worked very hard and appeared to get a lot out of what we were doing. Mr. Dumas and Mr. Murphy agreed that URI would send the volunteers back for future cleanups.

Cemetery #91 (Solomon Fry Lot) – Letter from Bruce MacGunnigle

Ms. Hitchen distributed correspondence from Mr. Bruce MacGunnigle, the Town Historian, who requested the Historic Cemetery Commission put Cemetery #91 on its clean up list of cemeteries as due to his research this cemetery is of high historic importance and has strong evidence that a former enslaved soldier of the American Revolution is buried here. Mr. MacGunnigle has been in touch with descendants of Winsor and Soloman Fry who are interested in learning more about the historic site.

Mr. Clarke said he would talk with the property owner. The Commissioners noted there needs to be a confirmation of how many people are actually

buried at this site by obtaining evidence via additional research, and developing a relationship with the homeowner in order to do a cleanup.

Cemetery Cleanup on November 14th Discussion & Logistics

Ms. Formisano indicated at this point there are 16 volunteers who have signed up for the cleanup as well as 7 volunteers from Frenchtown Baptist Church. The Commission agreed to have a cleanup at Cemetery #18 in conjunction with Mr. Soares Eagle Scout project; those restoring Cemetery #18 can park and meet behind Absolute Fitness.

Other cemeteries selected to be cleaned in case of an overflow of volunteers include Cemeteries #30 and #32.

Veteran Day Parade

The Commission unanimously agreed to participate in the upcoming Veteran's Day parade. Mr. Clarke offered his truck and trailer for use in the parade route. The Commission will prepare a before and after theme; half of the trailer will be an unkept cemetery while the other half will be a pristine restored cemetery. Participants include Mr. Beaumier, Mr. Murphy and Mr. Clarke.

Staff Update

Ms. Hitchen indicated she has not yet received the monthly report from Bank Newport but did deposit the \$2,000.00 from the Town.

Staff indicated she would be away for the December 1st meeting and asked if the Commission wanted to cancel or reschedule the meeting date. The Commission chose to reschedule to Tuesday, December 8th at 6pm to be held at the Varnum Armory with a volunteer appreciation pizza party to be held at 6:30 pm. Ms. Formisano volunteered to create an invitation which would be sent to all volunteers who have participated in a cleanup event. The thought of giving out the "Golden Rake Award" to the hardest working volunteer was suggested.

State Cemetery Advisory Representative Report

Mr. Clarke recommended talking with local Scout Masters in order to obtain basic formats of Eagle Scout requirements as the Commissions seems to be getting an influx of scout projects.

Mr. Clarke commented there was an Independent article written by Bruce MacGunnigle about the Tillinghast family cemetery back on August 28, 2014 which he referred to “as a hidden gem.”

Mr. Clarke also updated the Commission about his Cemetery book – it is almost complete but still needs to meet with Fred Gomes, the Special Project Manager in DPW in order to finalize the GIS location of a few cemeteries. Once that is done he will give it to Mr. Murphy but he emphasized it is time for the Town to step it up.

Mr. Clarke mentioned the donated Steiner will be fixed over the winter and the leaf vac is now in the hands of Danny Moone.

is in the process of updating the Master Cemetery book with information and data that he received from the Planning Department, land evidence as well as from Northeast Revaluation. He will send everyone an updated book when complete. Once complete he plans on retiring.

Public Comment

Mr. Murphy commented the next State Cemetery Commission meeting is scheduled for November 18th which he plans to attend. He also took care of the “Bicknell” footstones at the Cedar Avenue cemetery with Mr. Dumas.

A Commissioner noted a huge tree fell in the vicinity of Cemetery #25, appears to be in the cemetery that the Parks & Rec. Department tends to. Mr. Murphy will contact Ms. Cathy Bradley, the Director of the Dept.

This being her last meeting as a Historic Cemetery Commissioner, Mr. Murphy thanked Vice-Chair Ms. Formisano for all her hard work, dedication to the Commission, leadership, support and organization with volunteer cleanup efforts. She will be missed.

Approval of Minutes – October 6, 2015

Motion by Mr. Feisthamel to approve the October 6, 2015 minutes.
Seconded by Mr. Dumas. Approved 5-0.

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Feisthamel, seconded by Mr. Beaumier. Approved
5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.