

Historic Cemetery Commission Minutes
125 Main Street
June 7, 2016
6:00 p.m.

Members Present: Deron Murphy (Chair), Jason Beaumier, Gene Dumas,
Chris Feisthamel and Kathy Healey.

Others Present: Alan Clarke and Bob Chorney.

Staff present: Lea Anthony Hitchen, Assistant Town Planner

Mr. Chorney, a member of the public and frequent cemetery volunteer, was present who informed the Commission he and Mr. Jim Ostiguy assessed the stone damage at Cemetery #72 (Wickes Family Lot), located north of Division Road – there were various stones set back straight located in both the front and rear of the cemetery, a couple of which were fairly large stones in the front. Both he and Mr. Ostiguy lifted between 20-25 stones and found two large stones in the front left corner to be very unique. Mr. Chorney estimated 90 percent of the stone work is complete but there is still work to be done with the anticipation of returning to this cemetery in September/October.

Mr. Chorney submitted a receipt in the amount of \$22.25 for fill which was purchased to build up the forms. Motion by Mr. Beaumier to reimburse Mr. Chorney \$22.25. Seconded by Mr. Dumas. Approved 5 – 0.

Approval of Minutes – May 3, 2016

Motion by Mr. Beaumier to approve the May 3, 2016 minutes with a minor amendment. Seconded by Mr. Dumas. Approved 4-0.

Discussion of Spring Cemetery Cleanups

The Commissioners noted the May 14th cleanup was successful – there were about 8 volunteers at Cemetery # 31, the Jeffrey Davis Lot, where additional

stones were uncovered, over 20 lawn bags were filled and numerous branches were pulled and piled for the DPW to pick up.

The Commission chose Cemeteries #63, 64, and #55 for the June 25th cleanup. Cemetery #63, the Spencer-Shippee Lot, located on the north side of Division Road and east of Moosehorn Road, has 13 graves. Cemetery #64, the Joseph Carpenter Lot, also located in the same general vicinity as Cemetery #63, are good candidates for a same day cleanup. As for Cemetery #55, the Robert Vaughn Lot, is located on open space land within The Wood's at East Greenwich subdivision – Ms. Hitchen indicated she would prepare a letter notifying the residents within the development and president of the homeowner's association that there would be a cleanup hosted by the Historic Cemetery Commission.

Mr. Beaumier noted there were at least five volunteers signed up for the June 25th event. Mr. Murphy was optimistic he could obtain more volunteers from South Point Church and the Lions Club.

Purchase of Supplies & Equipment

Mr. Clarke received a mailing for yard signs which he presented to the Commission. The Commission and Mr. Feisthamel will still follow up with the "A-frame" style sign that was discussed at the May meeting.

In preparation for the upcoming cleanup the suggestion was made to stock up on lawn bags. Mr. Beaumier motioned to approve the authorization of Mr. Murphy to purchase up to \$200.00 in lawn bags. Seconded by Mr. Feisthamel. Approved 5 – 0.

Potential new Cemetery off of Division Road

The Commission was contacted by a potential homeowner at 2555 Division Road who upon a home inspection found marked headstones on the property in a state of disarray; the woman was curious if the stones were part of a cemetery. Upon visiting the property, Mr. Clarke found it was not a new cemetery at this property. After researching the one standing stone in which the name "Bowen" was inscribed, there is a Mr. Bowen buried in a Coventry cemetery. Apparently the family purchased new stones and discarded the old ones. The former owner of subject property told a cemeterian in 1998 that he

had brought those stones to his house to build something and there they sat. Essentially these stones are duplicate stones.

Update on Eagle Scout Projects

Mr. Murphy was notified by Alfred Timperley that he completed the cleanup at Cemetery #20 for his Eagle Scout project. Mr. Murphy drove by and noted it looks absolutely fantastic and Mr. Timperley and the scouts did a great job of clearing it out; several trees were removed as well as debris and reopened the entrance so it is easily accessible.

Letter from Evelyn Wheeler, Washington County Commissioner, RI Advisory Commission on Historical Cemeteries

Staff received correspondence from Evelyn Wheeler which was forwarded to the HCC. The letter reminds Towns that back in 2011 the General Assembly passed legislation allowing towns to have the opportunity to preserve historic cemeteries by tax relief ordinances, typically in the form as an abatement. The HCC noted this topic has been discussed before as an incentive for homeowners but questioned who would be monitoring the cemeteries in order to obtain the yearly reduction. A tool such as this ordinance would help reduce the number of cemeteries for the Commission to cleanup as the Commission was formed to be advisory, not to be a cleanup crew. The Commission suggested inviting Ms. Wheeler to an upcoming meeting but for the time being tabling the topic.

State Cemetery Advisory Representative Report (Alan Clarke)

Mr. Clarke informed the Commission he has been preparing a handbook on burials with gatherings from Arnold, McGunnigle and Kettelle.

Public Comment

Mr. Beaumier suggested the HCC meet with the Town Council similar to what other town boards have done in the past. Staff advised to draft a letter.

Mr. Murphy welcomed new member Ms. Kathy Healey!!!!

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Dumas, seconded by Mr. Beaumier. Approved 5 – 0.

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Meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.