

DRAFT

RIDGEFIELD GRAVEYARD RESTORATION COMMITTEE

SPECIAL MEETING JANUARY 29, 2026 6 PM RIDGEFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MINUTES

PRESENT: Sara Champion, Susan Kwaskein, Susan Law, Tom McManus, Nancy Selander, Sarah Slavin

EXCUSED: Kevin Claegens, Michael Harrington

HONORARY MEMBER: Joel Third

GUEST: Ian Dow

Chair Nancy Selander called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

MINUTES: Sarah Slavin motioned for approval of the September 15, 2025 minutes. All approved except Tom McManus who abstained.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Tom reported a healthy improvement in plot sales at Ridgebury Cemetery and some pending action in sales at Mapleshade. The grant from State of Connecticut for Neglected Cemeteries is a repayment format and expenses need to be documented for the 2025-2026 \$8,000 grant. The next application will be due in early 2027. Nancy requested that for the March meeting figures for each of the Committee's accounts held by Town Hall be presented.

LIAISON WITH THE SEXTONS: No report.

Old Business:

1. Sara Champion reported on the DAR's America 250th Anniversary Project. The booklet containing brief biographical information on many of the Town's Revolutionary soldiers is progressing nicely. Susan Kwaskein, Nancy Selander and Susan Law are helping with gathering this information. Nearly all of the soldier's military tombstones have been cleaned by the DAR and Graveyard Committee members.
2. The cemetery signs for both Ridgebury and Branchville Cemeteries are needed. Rather than wait for help from the Town, it was suggested that they be purchased outright. Branchville costs would be paid by the Committee funds and Ridgebury's paid from their endowment monies. Nancy volunteered to look into this.

3. An Open House at Branchville Cemetery is scheduled for June 14th. The public will be made aware through social media outlets, printed notices in The Ridgefield Pres and Danbury News Times and other places as determined. Rudy Marconi and Dan Jowdy (Kane's Funeral Home) will also be contacted for input. The purpose is to try to establish proof of ownership and location of held gravesites. There are no official records of ownership available but all current tombstones (over 800) have been recorded.
4. The Historical Society has found a camera that we can use to photograph all the Tombstones in Branchville Cemetery. Sarah Slavin and Susan Law will do this as soon as weather permits. The written documentation, GPS numbers and photographs will then be entered into the Ridgefield Historical Society's data base.
5. Heartfelt THANKS were extended to Joel Third for his and his late wife, Betty Jane's years of service to the Committee. Joel had requested Honorary Member status and we are pleased to have his continued input and advice.
6. A warm welcome was extended to Ian Dow who is requesting membership on the Committee. His application is being submitted to the Board of Selectmen for approval.

New Business:

1. Spring Clean-up is scheduled for March 28 as Easter is early this year, April 5th.
2. Contact is to be made with the Historical Society regarding the data entry of the Branchville Cemetery tombstone information. The possibility of either a High School May internship person or a paid summer intern individual were mentioned.
3. The 2026 meeting dates were approved and will be submitted to Town Hall. They are: January 29, March 16, May 18, September 21, November 16 and January 25, 2027.
4. Tom McManus resigned from the Committee.

Sarah Slavin moved to adjourn the meeting and all approved.

Susan Law, Recorder