

APPROVED

RIDGEFIELD GRAVEYARD RESTORATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

JANUARY 22, 2024 6 PM RIDGEFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESENT: Sara Champion, Michael Harrington, Susan Kweskin, Susan Law, Tom McManus, Nancy Selander, Sarah Slavin

EXCUSED: Joel Third

Nancy Selander called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM

The Minutes of November 13, 2023 were corrected as follows:

1. Under Report on Cemeteries: ....After the second sentence...."He (Tom) asked a question regarding the status of possible graves on Old Florida Cemetery". The answer was that a number of years ago members of the Committee stated that all graves had been moved to New Florida Cemetery, but some stones still remained.
2. Under New Business #5.... Tom asked the question "What is the Committee's mandate? as the Town's website states the charge of the Committee is .....to maintain and restore old Town cemeteries". The Committee's Mission Statement was read.....

The Minutes were then approved as corrected by Harrington, Kweskin, Law, Selander, Slavin. McManus abstained. Champion had not yet arrived.

Treasurer's Report: The budget request for Fiscal Year 2025 is \$40,150 based on mowing and clean-up expenses. Plot sales in Mapleshade have slowed somewhat as the Pandemic is over. Dying and dead ash trees in many of the cemeteries are still a major concern and expense. Inquiry was made about the various pocket cemeteries and a visit to them will be planned for those interested.

Liaison with the Sextons: Nancy spoke to Bill Bunkoci, Mapleshade Cemetery and he had no concerns. Tom had nothing to report from Ridgebury Cemetery.

Old Business:

1. Spring Tour... Susan Law reported she had found some interesting information on 5 or 6 of the residents who died of the Spanish Influenza (1918-1920) most of whom are buried in Fairlawn Cemetery and close by Olde Town Cemetery. Also in that general area, are a number of notable and interesting people who died in that general time frame. A meeting will be held in mid-February for those interested in putting the Tour together.
2. Moving Anne Weed's tombstone... Once the weather is warmer, Dave Selander will construct a new base and the new site in her Grandparents plot in Ridgebury Cemetery will be determined. Brief ceremonies will be held at the present site, The Historical Society's entrance, and at the new spot.

3. Branchville unlit flagpole...Nancy will contact the Legion about replacing the solar light.

New Business:

1. Ye Olde Burial Ground maintenance..... It was decided to do a yearly clean-up/maintenance effort. Sarah will contact the neighbors, the Grenerts, to see if those workers can park in their driveway as it is a dangerous road with no available parking. Nancy will also share this information with the First Selectman.
2. Ridgefield Thrift Shop Grant... Susan L. and Nancy will submit the application by month's end. The monies will be applied to the purchase of two new Magnolia bushes for a spot in Olde Town Cemetery and money to have professional help in pruning and cabling older trees.
3. Susan L. and Sarah reported that over 300 graves have been documented in Branchville Cemetery. Nancy said that a camera is available at the Historical Society to use in documentation. Tom requested that a report on tombstone repair and reconstruction be given at the meetings.
4. To better accommodate Committee Member's schedules, it was decided to move the meeting's start time to 4 PM. Dates and times will be forwarded to Town Hall.

March 18	4PM
May 20	4PM
September 16	4PM
November 18	4PM
January 27,2025	4PM
5. Election of Officers .... Nancy will contact Town Hall to determine regulations.
6. Nancy relayed a conversation with a woman who might be interested in a sell back of possibly two gravesites but has no deed nor is certain of the actual location. Nancy made an extended effort to locate any possible information but was unsuccessful. Without a deed or other certain proof, this cannot be done.
7. Tom listed work that need attention. The many ash trees at the Gamaliel Smith Cemetery (West Lane), New Florida Cemetery (Rte. 7) has dead ash trees, continue the clean-up along the roadways that adjoin the cemeteries, and refreshing the painted cemetery signs.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:25 PM

Susan Law, Recorder