

APPROVED

RIDGEFIELD GRAVEYARD RESTORATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

NOVEMBER 13, 2023 6 PM RIDGEFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESENT: Sara Champion, Mike Harrington, Susan Kweskin, Susan Law, Tom McManus, Nancy Selander

EXCUSED: George Hancock, Sarah Slavin, Joel Third

Nancy Selander called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM

Minutes of the September 18, 2023 meeting were unanimously approved as written by those who attended that meeting.

Treasurer's Report. No figures were available. Tom reported that plot sales in Mapleshade have returned somewhat to the pre-pandemic figures. Costs are up due to inflation by about 6-7%. Maintenance has extended closer to the road as the area beyond the stonewalls is now being weed wacked making for a cleaner look. Due to the rainfall and mild weather, mowing was extended to the end of October. Tree work has run about \$100,000 over the past 5 years. This has been covered with monies from the Town budget, grant monies and financial gifts. The state grant money for abandoned cemeteries (New Florida Cemetery) can be used for mowing expenses so the budgeted dollars will be applied for tree maintenance.

Liaison with the Sextons: Nothing to report.

Report on Cemeteries: Tom stated that the stone walls in the Gamaliel Smith and Davis Cemeteries will need some repair work. The Old Florida Cemetery has invasive weeds that need clearing and possibly a fence to delineate its boundaries. He asked a question regarding the status of possible graves in 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. It was noted that permission of the tree warden was needed prior to any planting in Town cemeteries.

Old Business

1. Invoice Approval Procedures: Those present approved that any expenditure over \$500 needs to be approved by the Committee. The vote was 5 approve (Champion, Harrington, Kweskin, Law, Selander) and one abstain (McManus).
2. Sue Kweskin has written another interesting and informative article on a person interred in one of the cemeteries. Rev. Thomas Hauley was chosen for his many roles and contributions to early Ridgefield. Sue is working with the Ridgefield Historical Society regarding its publication through their channels.
3. Thanks extended to all who helped with the Fall Clean-up. Questions were raised about when the flags should be removed from the veteran's graves. George Besse will be contacted.
4. Plans for a Spring Cemetery Tour are underway. Potential graves to be visited will include those of some victims from the Spanish Influenza epidemic and other notables of approximately the same timeframe.

New Business:

1. Nancy announced the George Hancock will be resigning from the Committee at the end of his term.
2. The tombstone of Anne Weed will be transferred from the Ridgefield Historical Society to the Weed plot of her Aunt and Uncle's located in Ridgebury Cemetery. A new base needs to be constructed to hold the stone. Dave Selander has offered to oversee this project.
3. The local DAR chapter, Cannon Ridge, would like to design and create a booklet describing and honoring the Revolutionary War soldiers and veterans as their America 250th Anniversary Project. They are asking if this Committee would like to help with this. The vote was unanimous. Sara Champion will be the coordinator.
4. The flag pole in Branchville Cemetery is not lit. The solar system is missing from high on the pole. Further thought is needed for how to remedy this.
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.....

"Our mission is to preserve and protect our town-owned cemeteries, to provide historical resources for the public and to maintain safety and accessibility for our visitors."

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 PM.