

## The Middletown Springs Old Cemetery Task Force – Official Meeting Minutes: July 12, 2017 at Middletown Springs Town Office

The Meeting was convened at 7:05 p.m. by Chair John Arsenault  
Attending: John Arsenault, Nora Rubinstein and David Wright  
Invited Expert: Michael Fannin

Minutes of meeting June 26, 2017 unanimously approved

The committee invited Mike Fannin to discuss his views of the current status of the old cemetery and approaches to assessing status, repair and conservation.

Mike has been working in the cemetery since about 1984, and based on his work, he feels that:

- the greatest hazard to the public is the Gardner stone in the southwest corner. It is leaning and the base is unstable and the stone could easily fall on a passerby. Mike suggests that this stone should be the priority for stabilization and/or repair given the danger to those walking through the cemetery – both visitors \ tourists and school children. Mike suggests that we hire a monument company to bring in a crane that can lift the monument to either repair its support or separate the sections as a temporary measure, and lay them on the ground so that they are no longer in a position to fall. As a temporary measure, it would be possible to stabilize the obelisk with an iron stake and cable until we can afford to do further work. It would be expensive to stabilize the monument properly, but as a hazard to those passing through the cemetery, it may be crucial to move forward as quickly as possible.
  - There was discussion about the possibility of getting a grant from the Old Cemetery Association or running a crowd sourcing campaign to raise the needed funds.
  - John will do some genealogical research to see if there are any descendants in the area who we might contact to see if they have any interest in helping defray the costs of the needed work
- The second priority is the white pine tree. This is a substantial hazard to the stones and the cemetery as a whole, should tree limbs or the tree itself fall in a storm or as a result of aging \ rot. The roots have already damaged some stones. David will be talking with Barry Spear and will ask him for an assessment of the health of the tree, the potential for pruning \ removal and his interest in doing the work. He will also ask for an estimate on such work.
- The next priority is cleaning and repair of the stones that have fallen or those that are broken and may have been relocated away from the graves they originally marked. While this needs to be done, contact with the earth is not likely to be doing further damage and there is the option of temporarily burying stones that are currently in need of care if there is no budget at this time to work on them. There is concern about damage to these stones from needed cemetery maintenance with the mower and trimmer. Mike feels that the stones should not be moved from their current location to be cleaned, but suggests doing the work on site. It would be better to lay stones that are leaning, flat on the ground or on a bed of gravel or pressure treated lumber.
  - There are new biocide products (available from Cathedral Stone) that can safely be applied to stones to kill the organisms growing on the stones without damaging the stone or marble further. Mike will treat one of the stones in the cemetery and take before-and-after photos to demonstrate what the biocide can do. Mike estimates that each gallon is approximately \$30 and the whole cemetery could be done with 2 gallons and some volunteer labor.
  - There are also new structural epoxies that are quite effective in holding pieces of broken stones together though they take longer to set up and require a return visit to shave off the excess. He was pleased with the status of the stones that were stabilized and repaired recently. While one is leaning, it is intact. Stones that were pinned do not show rust. Mike was pleased with the simplicity and durability of the stainless steel channels used to

reinforce broken stones, and noted the reversibility of the method as new techniques become available. We discussed placing the frame supports into the ground, but Mike suggests that that will be difficult because of the gravel and compacted soil.

- We discussed the use of ground-penetrating radar to identify the location of graves that are no longer marked with head stones or may have only partial stones. Mike suggested that we could make bronze plaques to identify these graves with whatever information is available
  - John will create a spreadsheet with overlapping data from the three existing surveys of the cemetery. These can be matched with the findings of the radar survey to make a map.
  - John will discuss mapping software with RRPC to see if we can get a better image of where the existing headstones are so that we can overlay that with the information from the spreadsheet.
  - Nora referred to the spreadsheets that are available through the National Park Service that can be used to record the names and information on the stones, their location and condition information. She will follow up on this to see if these can be adapted to our needs.
- Discussion included the following:
  - Need to discuss budget and financing opportunities with the Selectboard
  - Need for an expert who can help with the physical labor needed in repairing and resetting stones and who can work with volunteers to train them to conduct needed cleaning work
  - Possibility of placing tape around the Gardner stone with a warning sign
  - The possibility that the Gardner who is a member of the Historical Society is related to the Gardner family of the stone monument
  - The need for oversight of the work needed on the cemetery – separate from the committee committed to care for Pleasant View cemetery
  - The need to determine what funds are available for care of the old cemetery from the Copeland cemetery fund

Next steps:

Nora will:

- follow-up with Shelley Taylor on the Danby cemetery committee to determine who they are working with as a consultant
- download and assess National Park Service documents
- continue compiling resource lists of reading material, resource people and materials options

John will:

- begin developing spreadsheet compilation of documents pertaining to those who are buried in the old cemetery
- research Copeland cemetery document to determine what fund support was allocated to the old cemetery
- research Gardner family and descendants
- talk with RRPC re. mapping options

David will:

- get information from Mike re. cleaning materials for stones and potential resource experts
- talk with Barry Spear re. status and potential for removal of pine tree

The committee will next meet on July 19, 2017 at the Town Office. Interested members of the public are invited.

The meeting adjourned at 8:34 p.m.