

Cherokee County Cemetery Preservation Committee

Meeting Minutes

13 May 2014

Cherokee County Administration Building

Hickory Log Conference Room

Canton, Georgia

Members Present: Harold Silvey, Jean Vredenburgh, Loriann White, and Reuben Wilson

Members Not Present: John Cadle

Staff Present: Michael Chapman and Margaret Stallings

The committee meeting began at 6:05 pm. The committee met in the Hickory Log Conference Room this month in order to use the computer and projector in the conference room. The Business Center Conference Room where the committee usually meets does not have a computer or projector.

Ms. White requested that a change be made to the April meeting minutes prior to their approval. At the April meeting Ms. White referenced the New Bethel Cemetery and mentioned a noteworthy grave in the cemetery. Mr. Chapman recorded the noteworthy grave as that of a War of 1812 veteran; however, Ms. White actually referenced an African-American slave grave. Mr. Chapman said he would revise the April meeting minutes. A motion was made by Mr. Wilson to approve the April committee meeting minutes with revisions. Chairman Silvey seconded the motion. The committee voted unanimously to approve the revised meeting minutes.

At the April committee meeting Ms. Vredenburgh was nominated for the position of Secretary. However, due to work constraints, Ms. Vredenburgh will be unable to serve as Secretary. Ms. Vredenburgh plans to remain as active as possible on the committee.

Ms. Stallings and Mr. Chapman briefed the committee on recent efforts to correct errors in the official database of Cherokee County cemeteries. The Cherokee County GIS and Mapping Department maintains a database of all cemeteries in Cherokee County. Unfortunately some cemeteries are incorrectly located on the map. Ms. Stallings and Mr. Chapman have reviewed the location of all cemeteries in Cherokee County and selected those cemeteries that may be incorrectly located on the official map. Those cemeteries that may be incorrectly located on the map and have been surveyed were reviewed with the committee member who conducted the survey. Some committee members were able to confirm the correct location of the cemeteries while other members will have to conduct a site visit to confirm the correct location. Ensuring that Cherokee County has an accurate database of cemetery locations has been a longstanding goal of the committee.

Ms. Stallings said she is still working with a local high school student on an Eagle Scout project for a cemetery clean-up at Bruce/Fair Cemetery near East Cherokee Drive. Ms. Stallings said that the project has not been approved yet by the local Boy Scout unit. Ms. White volunteered to contact the Boy Scout and offer to help on behalf of the committee. Ms. Stallings said she would like a member of the committee to visit the cemetery with the Boy Scout before he begins the project to ensure that he is aware of appropriate cemetery preservation techniques.

Ms. White said she recently met with Chief Judge W. Alan Jordan of the State Court of Cherokee County regarding the use of inmates to perform community service in cemeteries. Ms. White said her meeting with Judge Jordan went well and she remains optimistic that a community service program can be developed.

Ms. White said that the president of the Georgia State Society of the National Society of the Children of the American Revolution (C.A.R.) would like to organize a cemetery clean-up in Cherokee County. C.A.R. is a nationwide patriotic youth organization with state chapters, open to anyone under the age of twenty-one who is descended from someone who took part in the American Revolution.

Mr. Wilson informed that committee that the Nix-Stephens Cemetery needs a significant clean-up effort. Mr. Wilson also suggested that local community groups could be tapped to clean-up cemeteries.

Ms. White informed the committee that she is in the process of revising her application to the R. J. Taylor, Jr. Foundation. The R. J. Taylor, Jr. Foundation promotes genealogical research in Georgia by providing grants to individuals and organizations to defray the cost of publishing approved projects. Ms. White is seeking a grant for Enon Cemetery. Ms. White is revising her original application to ensure that it meets all standards set by the R.J. Taylor, Jr. Foundation.

Ms. White raised the possibility of asking the Cherokee County Arborist to meet the committee at a cemetery to review the criteria needed to designate a tree as a Heritage Tree. A Heritage Tree is determined to be of unique and intrinsic value to the general public because of its size, age, historic association, unique species to the region, ecological value or any tree designated a Georgia State Champion, United States Champion or World Champion by the American Forestry Association. The Cherokee County Board of Commissioners can designate a tree as a Heritage Tree. If the tree is on private property the property owner must approve of the designation. Ms. White suggested several trees in Riverview Cemetery in Canton could be candidates for Heritage Tree status.

The committee discussed potential changes to the Board of Commissioners. 2014 is an election year and some Commissioners have opted not to run for re-election. Cemetery Preservation Committee members are appointed by Commissioners and the committee member's term runs concurrently with the Commissioner who appointed them.

The committee discussed the idea of holding its June meeting at Enon Cemetery near the intersection of Ridgewalk Parkway and Main Street in Woodstock. The committee has previously conducted such site visits to provide committee members an opportunity to see the problems and opportunities facing local cemeteries. Ms. White said she would contact a representative from Enon Cemetery to notify them about the committee's upcoming visit. Committee staff will monitor the weather on the day of the site visit and determine if the weather will preclude a visit.

Having no further business Ms. Vredenburg made a motion to adjourn the Cemetery Preservation Committee meeting. Ms. White seconded the motion. The committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 7:06 pm.

The next Cherokee County Cemetery Preservation Cemetery Preservation Committee meeting will be 9 June 2014 at Enon Cemetery in Woodstock.