

Cherokee County Cemetery Preservation Committee

Meeting Minutes

11 August 2014

Cherokee County Administration Building

Business Center Conference Room

Canton, Georgia

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

Members Not Present: John Cadle and Harold Silvey

Staff Present: Michael Chapman and Margaret Stallings

The committee meeting began at 6:11pm. In place of Mr. Silvey, Ms. White served as chairperson. Mr. Wilson made a motion to approve the June committee meeting minutes (the committee held its July meeting at Pine Knot Cemetery and minutes were not recorded). Ms. Vredenburgh seconded the motion. The committee voted unanimously to approve the June committee meeting minutes.

Ms. Stallings recapped the committee's July 21 visit to Pine Knot Cemetery (Mr. Silvey, Ms. Vredenburgh, and Ms. White were unable to attend). The committee briefly met at Pine Knot Cemetery, however, due to inclement weather the committee relocated to a nearby fast-food restaurant. The purpose of the Pine Knot Cemetery visit was to review options for marking the location of future burials in the cemetery. Pine Knot Cemetery is owned by Cherokee County and used for the burial of indigent persons. Future burial areas need to be marked in order to prevent burials from occurring in a haphazard, unsustainable manner. For example, several burials took place near large specimen trees which could damage the trees and surrounding soil. Mr. Chapman presented the committee with examples of various cemetery lot markers that could be purchased and inserted in the ground at Pine Knot Cemetery. The lot markers have a round disk, approximately three inches in diameter, mounted on a stake which is inserted into the ground. Ms. Stallings recommended that the markers should not be a combination of aluminum and stainless steel due to the possibility of galvanic corrosion. Wooden markers were also ruled out by the committee due to the possibility of deterioration. Ms. Vredenburgh pointed out that vandals may enter the cemetery and remove/damage the markers and that eventuality should be considered when purchasing markers. The committee suggested that staff continue to investigate the possibility of purchasing lot markers.

Ms. White asked committee staff to draft a section regarding inclement weather procedures to be inserted in the committee bylaws. There was some confusion on the morning of the Pine Knot Cemetery visit in July because some committee members thought the meeting would be cancelled due to inclement weather. However, some committee members thought the site visit was to proceed as scheduled. Ms. White asked Mr. Chapman to e-mail a draft of the inclement weather policy.

Ms. White raised the issue of unmarked graves at Pine Knot Cemetery. Ms. White suggested that at some point the committee needs to consider a method of marking graves. A survey of Pine Knot Cemetery using Ground Penetration Radar was conducted in 2012 and identified several potential unmarked graves. There are a number of depressions in the ground that are likely unmarked graves. Fortunately most of the suspected unmarked graves are surrounded by marked graves, thus providing some protection for the unmarked grave. Ms. Stallings noted that the Cobb County Cemetery Preservation Committee has a volunteer who makes markers for unmarked graves. Ms. White encouraged committee members and staff to seriously consider developing a way to mark unmarked graves in Pine Knot Cemetery.

Ms. White and Ms. Vredenburgh noted that they are still in the process of re-surveying and confirming the location of several cemeteries which are believed to be incorrectly located on the official Cherokee County cemetery map. The Cherokee County GIS and Mapping Department maintains a database of all cemeteries in Cherokee County. 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 and Ms. Vredenburgh pointed out that there are several large trees that have fallen at the cemetery which could result in a prolonged cleanup effort. Ms. Vredenburgh said that one of the individuals in the cemetery may be a veteran of the War of 1812 and could be entitled to a new marker.

Ms. White raised the possibility of putting the Adopt-A-Cemetery and Historic Preservation Ordinance before the Board of Commissioners. Ms. Stallings said that she would need to draft a memo to the County Manager regarding both matters before submitting an agenda request to place the items before the Commissioners. Ms. White and Ms. Vredenburgh agreed that both measures, particularly the Historic Preservation Ordinance, are quite helpful when applying for grants. Many organizations will not award grants to communities that do not have a Historic Preservation Ordinance.

Having no further business Mr. Wilson 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 6:45 pm.

The next Cherokee County Cemetery Preservation Cemetery Preservation Committee meeting will be 8 September 2014 at the Cherokee County Administration Building in Canton.