

## CITY OF GLOUCESTER

### CEMETERIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE MAYORAL UPDATE

September 1, 2016 through March 1, 2017

#### COMMITTEE EVOLUTION

The Gloucester City Council reactivated the Cemetery Advisory Committee (CAC) on February 17, 2015 to “recommend yearly budget for management and maintenance of city-owned cemeteries” and to “recommend any changes in rates for perpetual care lots”. After recommendation from the mayor the CAC members were approved on August 23, 2016.

#### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Sandy Barry and Beverly McKean, co-chairs and Patti Amaral, general member. Sandy and Beverly have also attended extensive training on the cleaning and restoration of gravestones.
- David Rhinelander, Historical Commission, has been particularly helpful and attends most meetings.
- Mike Hale the Director of Public Works, ex-officio member.

#### CHALLENGES

Focus has been on the worst two cemeteries: Clark Cemetery and First Parish Burial Ground. When time allows, we’ve assessed the poor condition of Second Parish and the Universalist Burial Ground.

- Clark Cemetery condition: Vandalism. Overgrown with extremely invasive Japanese Knotweed making it near impossible to access gravestones and many of the gravestones had been damaged and/or broken. Richard Clark, who has ancestors buried in Clark, came to visit the graves and was appalled by the condition.
- Veteran’s gravestones: Many Revolutionary and Civil War graves have significant damage (broken, laying on the ground, and in pieces) and are in need of proper and *respectful* restoration.
- City founder’s stones: First Parish was established in 1644 holding much of the city’s early history. Work has to continue to restore the stones. The DPW has been taking care of mowing the cemetery, which has helped give us access and improve its image.
- Clark Cemetery management plan: There isn’t a comprehensive plan addressing landscape, cleanup, restoration, maintenance, and easy access to cemetery related history. We need to come up with a plan to draw in the community and increase public interest and establish funding channels.
- First Parish Burial Ground Preservation Plan: A comprehensive plan was completed in 2008 costing \$10,000 but most of the recommendations were not addressed due to lack of funding and inadequate oversight.
- Cemetery historic info: Hardcopy records are spread out in basements, library file cabinets, DPW files, and Archive shelves. There isn’t a centralized, searchable database, which would enable an individual the ability to quickly find accurate information about their ancestor.

#### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN PAST 6 MONTHS

1. Clark Cemetery cleanup: Cleanup organized by councilor Joe Orlando in November making the cemetery visible and walkable again. Ward Councilor Steve LeBlanc, along with 35 volunteers were instrumental in making this happen. Two local landscaping companies also donated their time - AJ Orlando of Compass Rose and Alex Sands of Annisquam Landcare were awarded citations for their efforts at a City Council meeting. Councilor Jamie O’Hara has also donated several hours of his time.
2. Clark and First Parish: Awarded a SHRAB Preservation Grant for Veteran Collections. This is a matching grant for \$12,653. Letters of support received from GHC, City Council, DAR, Archives, Veteran’s Services,

DPW, and the Clark family. This will give us the ability to repair and restore 16 veteran stones by professional conservation specialists. Some of the match will include volunteer stone cleaning and repair (31 veteran stones) as well as donated time from local landscaping services.

3. Presentation to Awesome Gloucester for additional funding. We've been unsuccessful twice, but we will be attempting again in the future.
4. Submitted a CPA project eligibility application to fund repairs to stones that require professional expertise and equipment. Large stones in Clark have fallen off their bases and repair First Parish founder's stones.
5. Developed strong relationship with Mike Hale at DPW. The DPW has been helping with mowing First Parish, Clark cleanup, and signage. Mike has also provided valuable guidance and advice.
6. Daughters of the American Revolution – The CAC presented a one-hour talk about First Parish and Richard Clark presented Clark Cemetery. After the presentation DAR made a \$300 donation.
7. Created and maintained Facebook pages for First Parish, Clark, Bray, Second Parish, and Universalist. This helps communicate news, cleanups and post historical information and answer questions.
8. Began collaborating on a new cemetery database with DBA expert Carol Kelly. We've loaded 9 cemeteries, obtained from the Sawyer Free library genealogy site, into an MS Access database. The cemeteries include - Bray, Cove Hill, Langsford Street, Magnolia Point, Proctor, Prospect (High) St., Second Parish, Sumner Street, and Universalist Burial Yard.
9. Continuing the ongoing gathering of historic cemetery data sources related to cemeteries and headstones. We're using the extensive Google Drive data repository establish and shared by the local Burial Ground Restoration Alliance. The Alliance has involved us in several extensive trainings.
10. Met Martha Lyon of Landscape Architecture LLC, the author of the 2008 First Parish Burial Ground Preservation Plan, who said she thought First Parish looked better. We want to continue to execute her plan over the next 5 years.

#### **GOALS FOR NEXT 6 MONTHS**

1. Oversee and manage the SHRAB grant work that will involve trained volunteers and professionals.
2. Continue the condition assessment of the other city-owned cemeteries.
3. Find out who's working in the cemeteries and establish a way to communicate with them. We've meet with Walter McGrath and he's given us a lot of his Cove Hill notes and a video he did for Cape Ann TV.
4. Review the perpetual care fee increase based on the work done by Mark Cole, Asst Dir DPW.
5. Continue working on the database with Carol Kelly as well as design the searchable website interface.
6. Populate the CAC city website with current and interesting information
7. Meet and collaborate with new archivist Katelynn Vance who will share her time between Archives and the Library.
8. Prepare the budget for the coming year and submit through the Mike Hale DPW.
9. Explore options for funding so we can continue the repair the damaged headstones. Ensure timely access to funds and distributions. Meet with Gloucester Fund Barry Pett to establish a relationship.
10. Develop 5 year plan for Clark – Clean, restore and preserve headstones, re-establish main circulation paths for walking, maintaining cemetery. Work with conservation agent on how to eradicate the Japanese knotweed.
11. Continue executing recommendations made on the 2008 First Parish Burial Ground Preservation Plan.
12. Gloucester's 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023 will coincide with (hopefully) completion of 5-year plan. Plan events celebrating improved condition of cemeteries and accessibility of historical info.
13. Involve local schools, scouting groups and other interested organizations, including the Rotary Club by offering to give presentations and tours.
14. Design and recommend signage, including QR codes, with cemetery history to increase interest.
15. Continue research, with Historical Commission, into three shipwreck graves; Rebecca Ann and Industry in First Parish, and the Persia in the Universalist.

Respectfully submitted,

CAC Members, Beverly McKean, Sandy Barry, Patty Amaral

Cc: Mike Hale, Gloucester Historical Commission, and City Council