

## Lyme Cemetery Trustees

### **MINUTES: June 3, 2020 (with addenda) Old Cemetery 5:15 PM**

Present: Laurie Wadsworth, chair; Jay Cary, Michael Hinsley  
Former resident and Historians' board member Susanne Simon joined us about 7:00.

*(With the governor's shut down orders, we were unable to meet in March, April or May. Since we met outdoors, wore masks, kept 6 feet apart, and were fewer than 10 people, we were allowed to meet in June.)*

1. Unanimously approved Minutes from the December 3, 2019 meeting.
2. With several goals in mind, we walked through much of the lovely Old Cemetery. These goals were:
  - Check on the areas around the two large stumps from last year's tree removals
  - Landscaping: check on the grass and consider new tree plantings
  - Identify significant stones that we'd want Jonathan Appel to work on this year.
3. The areas around the stumps look fine. Grass is growing and the gravestones around them are brightening up in the sun.
4. Landscaping: We continue to be pleased and impressed with the careful job that Adam O'Donnell and crew are doing cutting the grass. We considered possibly planting some flowering trees on bare spaces near the flagpole to give some color (Lilacs or flowering crab, for instance). Jay and Michael in favor; Laurie likes the open, plain appearance. May postpone until next year, as we want Jonathan to do some extra work this year.
5. Stones to be repaired: Since other duties delayed Jonathan's arrival in Lyme in 2019, and inclement weather prevented him from working on many stones last fall, we decided unanimously to use the funds saved from that toward hiring him for a longer period this year, up to \$15,000 instead of his usual \$10,000.

Unanimously agreed that **top priority**, given its significance to the Town's history and our Civil War graves, is for Jonathan to work on the **1863 obelisk commemorating the three Lyme young men** who enlisted, served, and died together, in the lower part of Section 2. The obelisk is leaning, and should be taken apart, have a new foundation built, and professionally glued back together. Jay took a photo, which Laurie will send to Jonathan.

After he completes that, we chose about a dozen other of the oldest stones for his attention, mostly in the SE corner of Division 1. Many are splitting down the middle, top to

bottom, from water getting in and freezing. We added the 1786 stone of Col. Ebenezer Green, since it is possibly the first stone in this cemetery. We marked all of these stones with thin dowels. *Laurie will go back and add flagging and record our choices.*

We also want to strongly request of Jonathan to spend at least a day up at Beal, where many of the old stones are leaning badly. Michael will make sure he has a good supply of water. Laurie will send him some photos that show the problems.

Jay pointed out the stone for Olive Nelson which had been severely damaged over the last several years (perhaps by mowers) which he will repair with guidance from Jonathan.

6. Duties for 2020-21: Laurie will reluctantly continue to serve as Chair and Secretary. Jay will continue as Treasurer, and Michael as our accomplished and knowledgeable go-fer.

7. Laurie will write to Jonathan Appel to confirm that he is coming this summer, and to request that he give us a few extra days. [Note: He did come in August.]

8. At a future meeting we will again consider hiring someone to repair the stone wall surrounding the Beal Cemetery, depending on our funds for this year.

Adjourned 7:45 PM. (*Beautiful evening!*)

## **NOTES:**

- With the Covid-19 pandemic in “full swing,” the Cemetery Trustees did not meet again in 2020. However, we did hire Topo Graphix to survey the Beal Cemetery with ground penetrating radar to search for the burial sites of Cate and Prince, the two enslaved people buried there around 1800. Several unidentified sites were found. Trustees will pursue appropriate ways to honor Cate and Prince in 2021.
- Jay and Laurie also met informally with Patty Jenks, via Zoom, on Dec. 29 to get her input about the sexton position and about green burials. She strongly requested that purchase of cemetery lots be done through the Town Clerk from now on so that she can keep accurate records. We also learned that she enters burial information into a data base “when she has a minute,” so we will try to streamline that process and offer our assistance. We might need to purchase a program designed for cemetery record-keeping. Presently, most of the records are in old ledgers in the Town Office safe.

Patty had surveyed the Selectmen’s Minutes from the 1960s and could not find any indication that they had passed any ordinance requiring that coffins be contained in a cement vault. This seems to open the door for so-called “green burials.” The Trustees will pursue this idea further in 2021, with tentative plans for: (1) a forum to educate folks about the practice, and (2) determining any guidelines for green burials in Highland Cemetery, such as possibly requiring some sort of headstone or marker.