



Stonington
Cemetery

STONINGTON CEMETERY ASSOCIATION ANNUAL REPORT

October 2021

We continue to see stabilization and growth for the Stonington Cemetery Association (SCA). We remain a hands-on organization with a part-time staff of contractors including Tim Keena, who, with his family and employees, loyally maintains the grounds, Marilyn Buck who keeps our books, Robert Kenyon who excavates gravesites and plows in the winter, and Elliott Shaw as an additional regular grounds contractor.

The Board supervises the vendors and fills in where necessary to manage projects, maintain the website, perform development functions, and plan for the future. Board members and Advisory Board members have worked hard to ensure that your contributions make a difference.

Volunteers have completed projects beyond the hopes and dreams of this Board. We would not be the organization we are today without their help.

Board Members:

Lynn Callahan . President
Ann Freeman . Vice President
Kathy Calkins . Treasurer
Stewart Joseph . Secretary
Shane Devine
Robert Hersh
Tim Hogen
Emeline McKeown
Robert Simmons
Don Steinhoff
Thomas Taylor

Advisory Board Members:

Mary Thacher
George Avery
Fred Burdick
Bob Suppicich
Stuart Vyse

Our community is everyone who has friends, relatives, and loved ones buried in Stonington Cemetery, residents of Stonington, those who have an interest in its history, all who pass by and are refreshed by the landscape, and those who have contributed to its maintenance and preservation.

What follows is a summary of our work during this past year, some explanation of our current situation and some ideas about future plans. We welcome your input.

• Financial •

The Board of Directors is happy to present a balanced budget for the fifth year in a row. We ended the fiscal year at the end of June with a surplus of over \$36,000. Much of the surplus comes from not paying for a cemetery superintendent. We will have to fill this position in the coming year. This has to be anticipated as a budget item for the future.

At the end of FY 2021 (June 30, 2021), the balance in the checking account was \$63,035. The savings account was closed last year to simplify bookkeeping. The Mystic Management Asset Fund was at \$363,976.36 (\$347,451.95 in funds + \$16,544.41 in cash). This number is in comparison to \$202,965 at the end of FY 2015-2016. There have been no withdrawals from this fund over the past several years. It has instead been growing. Details of our fund's investments are available upon request.

The annual budget this year is \$187,831– \$21,594 more than last year. To fund our projects we rely on sale of plots and burial income as well as donations. Grants help to a lesser extent. You helped us exceed our donation goal this past year and we are hoping for your energetic support this year again.

On the expense side, we estimate we'll pay about \$50,000 for landscaping and almost \$10,000 - \$12,000 for grave excavation. Although burials represent income, we don't receive the full amount of the fee, as we must pay Robert Kenyon for his services. Administrative expenses are bookkeeping (\$4,500), insurance (\$3,500), and printing and postage (\$4,500). This fiscal year we expect to spend \$80,000 for cemetery improvements. Some of this is for projects completed in FY2019-2020 but not billed until this fiscal year. These include expenses related to building improvements and expansion of burial areas.

Most of our income comes from the burial services, but this income is a bit unpredictable. We hope to raise \$105,000 this fiscal year. As plots sales comprise a significant portion of our annual income, the ability to offer plots in various locations in the cemetery is important. Scattered unsold plots have been located and added to the availability list. The project to open the West Grounds for burial will result in additional space and include sites with a different character.

The second highest income category is donations. In fiscal year 2021, we received a total of \$40,403 was received far exceeding our goal of \$30,000. Donations represented one fourth of our operating expenses and as such are vital to funding cemetery operations. We are grateful for the generosity of our community.

Additional important monies are derived each year from grants. Although income from our investment fund is listed as income, we reinvest those gains rather than spend them.

The annual financial statement will be available later in the year and is being prepared by Hoyt, Filippetti & Malaghan of Westerly, RI. We are also paying the firm for an

engagement review – a closer look at our practices with a rewritten report and suggestions on improving our record keeping.

The FY 2020-2021 budget is attached at the end of this report.

• **Development** •

During the past fiscal year, \$40,403 was raised as a result of our two appeals. This represents a 25% increase over last year. We are grateful to our community for this support.

The actual number of donors has increased each year as well to 215 this year.

During the past year, the SCA received a grant for \$3,000 from the Town of Stonington to assist with grounds maintenance.

The Stonington Cemetery Association was realized through the generosity of interested community members with a vision for a public cemetery open to all serving both as a non-sectarian burial place and as an artistic landscape. We remind you that the same spirit is needed today if we are to continue to honor the gift of the original founders to this community.

• **Grounds** •

The total number of plots sold was 23. There were 12 burials of cremated remains and 11 full burials. Tim Keena removed six trees. Thirty stumps were removed, the shavings removed and the areas were re-seeded. Ten headstones that were dangerously leaning were righted by Craig Czaja. Others were stabilized by Bob Suppicich and Elliott Shaw.

Most of the work on the grounds this year resulted in changes that turn out to be less visible after completion than before. Over six diseased trees were removed. Others were trimmed. In the spring, 35 unsightly stumps were ground, the resulting debris removed and the areas re-seeded. The total cost for stump removal work was about \$4,953. In at least one area, the removal of a stump means additional plots can be sold. All over this work has removed an appearance of neglect. We look forward to completing this overdue project during FY 2022.

Plot owners have made contributions to help pay for this type of grounds work which is both preventative – diseased trees endanger historic stones – and beautification. A donor helped us re-claim a messy area on Hyde Avenue near the Palmer Mausoleum and the Denison family plot. Several lilacs were installed and under planted with leucoethe and sweet woodruff dramatically improving that corner. Other donors have contributed to tree limbing and removal.

Tim Keena's firm continues to mow, trim and remove dead trees and fallen limbs and respond to emergencies such as fallen limbs blocking roadways or a skunk near the front gate. His team is generous with their time and attention. Elliott Shaw has been preparing

and seeding in areas where stumps were removed, filling sunken burials, removing the many sticks and branches that our trees shed naturally. He planned and installed the lilac bed.

We spent almost \$49,000 in FY 2021 on our grounds. This is in addition to countless volunteer hours. Much of this expense was long overdue maintenance, but our 17 acres of historic cemetery grounds are expensive to maintain and the community must anticipate this large annual outlay.

Work to restore the two historic sheds will finally be completed this fall if good weather allows for painting. Last spring the outhouse was removed. Soon Pawcatuck Roofing will begin work re-siding two sides of the hearse house. Bob Wood will donate a fixed gate to match the existing Gene Anderson-built gate that will tie the two buildings together visually. The result will be a long awaited improvement in the appearance of the cemetery from Route 1.

After the annual meeting last year, the Board received the final survey and restoration estimates from GNCB, the firm that performed an engineering study of the Billings Mausoleum. This report was paid for through a grant from the State Office of Historic Preservation. GNCB concluded that this structure is in a perilous state and will collapse within several years if steps aren't taken to preserve the structure. Stabilization and restoration estimates for the exterior - excluding the stained glass - are in the \$1,000,000 range.

In early spring, we obtained a quote from Cenaxo, an engineering firm recommended by GNCB who conducted the engineering survey of the Billings Mausoleum. Cenaxo prepared an estimate for temporary protective draping of the Mausoleum to prevent further water intrusion. Rain leaking through rotted gutters has rotted structural timbers and eroded the masonry. The estimates for the temporary protection were in the neighborhood of \$35,000 - \$53,000 depending on the extent of the project. Preservation and restoration would require a capital campaign. The reports are available on the website and upon request.

While much good work to improve the appearance of the grounds - repair of the iron fence, restoration of the maintenance buildings, and care for the headstones - has taken place during the last five years, our iconic landmark structure remains untended and will collapse without a major reconstruction effort.

During the past summer, Bob Suppicich has continued his work cleaning stones, offering directions and bits of history to visitors and urging the Board to move ahead with its work.

Work on the West Grounds plan slowed this summer. We had hoped to have a plan to share with you at this meeting, but didn't meet this goal.

• Record Keeping •

An important responsibility of the Board is record keeping. We currently have over 4,700 known burials on our property including the earliest burials from the mid-18th century. Records are scattered and include original volumes from the time of incorporation in 1849 (now stored at the Woolworth Library) to the more recent XL database first

compiled in 2016-18 by Joanna Case and Judy Hicks. In between are card files, notebooks and old and new maps.

It has been a goal of this Board for several years to store all this information in a central digital location. Gmail Drive isn't sufficient. Recent advances in cemetery software programming have brought down the cost of these cemetery management systems. They are now cloud-based making remote access possible.

This summer we signed a contract with Cemsites to put as much of our burial data as possible into a custom built online program. All known burials will be points in a digital filing system. In addition to basic information – recorded dates of birth and death, epitaph, location, veteran status, etc. – we will be able to store plot sale information, obituaries, family history, photos. Recent records remain almost as scattered as the older ones.

The implementation effort has taken many hours of preparation on our part – largely through the efforts of Ann Freeman who has combed through records from the last century and Kathy Calkins who has prepared our XL database to merge with the Cemsites program.

Once this new system is live, it will require many additional hours to proof the work and to enter additional information. We are applying for assistance through a Charles B. Allyn Foundation grant.

An important part of record keeping, especially as we look into the future, will be careful numbering of new burial areas. We have hired Czaja Brothers, a cemetery services firm, to carefully grid and number our newer burial areas. Each plot will have a numbered metal pin. This work is will cost upwards of \$5,000 in the first phases, but is vital to organized sales and burials.

• Website & Communications •

The website continues to be useful for people – mostly outside the community – for assistance with plot location. Often the burials being searched for aren't located in our cemetery, but we have been able to act as a referral organization. The Gmail account has contributed to better service and improved customer relations and has made sales and burial arrangements easier. The number of FaceBook members is growing. Brochures at the entry gate are useful for first-time visitors. The sixth edition of the annual Tombstone Chronicles newsletter will be mailed in late November.

A recent subscription to Constant Contact will help us to reach out to our membership.

• Checklist of Projects •

We continue to include this checklist of projects and needs that the Board assembled in 2016. We have made progress each year since and reported on it. It seems like a good

idea to keep a list in front of the community (and the Board) as a yardstick for what we've accomplished and checklist for what remains to be accomplished.

- A rainy day fund to cover unanticipated maintenance expenses. **2021:** *We feel that we ended this year with sufficient funds to cover an imaginable emergency.*
- A plan of development and the capital campaign required to prepare the West Grounds for burials. **2021:** *We await final drawings from Reed-Hildebrand. A ground probing radar firm, CorBuilt LLC conducted a survey of areas in the West Grounds to determine where there is ledge and where we will be able to plan burial areas.*
- Funding to re-build our endowment. **2021:** *The fund has increased by over \$160,000 since 2016.*
- Purchase of a cemetery mapping and record keeping software system to efficiently and accurately manage recent purchases and burials as well as to provide a platform for historic burial information that interested parties can access to research their family histories. **2021:** *Implementation is in progress.*
- Planning and fund raising to preserve important cemetery buildings & monuments: the Billings Mausoleum, the Phelps Mausoleum, the Atwood Colonnade, the Receiving Chapel, the CP Williams monument, and the work sheds. **2021:** *GNCB survey and cost estimates will be a first step in the preservation of the largest structure on the grounds – the Billings Mausoleum. Restoration of the wood buildings is complete. Other structures aren't in need of immediate repair.*
- Upkeep for all stones and monuments and the fence. **2021:** *Stone repair and righting is ongoing. The problem currently has less to do with funding than in finding competent repair firms. We will replace the granite ball missing from the right column of the front gate this fall from funds at hand.*
- Various smaller projects including – signage for the West Grounds, new “street” signs, rubbish cans, professional attention to trees & shrubs including maintenance & new plantings. **2021:** *Smaller beautification projects are underway – some paid for from funds at hand and some by donors.*
- A Strategic Plan is added to our list of tasks. We hoped to have one by the end of last summer, but much of Board effort was directed toward administrative work - the chores that keep us profitable. We would welcome a hand from a community member!

We embrace the participation of individuals wanting to assist us. We have a need for all sorts of help – from work on the grounds to research to data management. Please don't hesitate to volunteer your service. You may be able to fill a need we haven't recognized or articulated.

Respectfully, Lynn Callahan

STONINGTON CEMETERY ASSOCIATION
2021-2022 Budget

INCOME

	2022	2020-21 Actual-Budget	2019-20 Actual-Budget		
Gifts and Donations	\$35,000	\$40,403	\$30,000	26,440	\$30,000
Interest from Endowment	6,000	\$6,915	5,500	7,680	5,000
Sale of Lots	70,000	77,000	37,538	30,555	25,000
Fees for Burial Services	35,000	28,850	28,000	32,700	25,000
Grants	5,000	12,800	12,800	5,000	6,500
Other Income & Interest	0	\$269	0	2,805*	0
Transfer from Accumulated Revenue*	\$36,831		40,062		4,000
TOTAL INCOME	\$187,831	\$166,237	\$153,900	\$145,422	95,500

EXPENSES

Administrative					
	2022	2020-21 Actual-Budget	2019-20 Actual-Budget		
Bookkeeping: Marilyn Buck	\$5,000	\$4,250	\$5,000	\$4,550	\$5,000
Accounting: Financials/Tax Preparation	4,000	975	1,000	975	1,000
Investment & Banking Fees: Mystic Asset	2,000	1,086	1,000	942	900
Supplies/Printing/Postage/Advertising/Web	4,600	4,746	3,500	3,376	3,400
Insurance	3,500	3,358	3,400	3,353	3,400
General Services: Misc Expenses	3,000	2,250	2,100	804	500
Returned Plots- Now Under Misc					
Transfer to Endowment	0	0		0	0
Total Administrative	\$22,100	\$16,865	\$26,000	\$14,000	\$14,200

Grounds – Maintenance & Utilities					
	2022	2020-21 Actual-Budget	2019-20 Actual-Budget		
Landscaping:Lawn/Trees/Leaf Removal/Roads	\$50,000	\$44,814	\$43,000	\$40,601	\$34,800
Miscellaneous: General Maintenance	5,000	3,995	9,000	6,817	4,000
Utilities&Services:Electricity/Phone/Dmpstr	1,900	1,729	1,600	\$1,538	\$1,500
Grounds – Burial Sales & Services					
Burial Services - Kenyon	\$9,000	\$8,000	\$17,000	\$10,800	\$6,000
Cemetery Superintendent	19,831	0	0	10,050	11,000
Total Grounds	\$85,731	\$58,538	\$70,900	\$68,282	\$53,300

Capital Projects					
	2022	2020-21 Actual-Budget	2019-20 Actual-Budget		
Restoration Projects*	\$20,000	\$16,424	\$17,000	\$10,954	\$12,000
Preparation for New Burial Areas	60,000	37,577	40,000	9,210	12,000
Total Capital Projects	\$80,000	\$54,000	\$57,000	\$20,164	\$24,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$187,831	\$129,405	\$153,900	\$101,846	\$95,000
NET INCOME		\$36,831		\$105,360	

Account status as of 30 June 2021: Checking - \$63,035.13 | Management Fund - \$363,976.36 (\$347,451.95 in funds + \$16,544.41 in cash)

*From checking account