



Stonington
Cemetery

STONINGTON CEMETERY ASSOCIATION ANNUAL REPORT

October 2022

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. Elliott Shaw of Green Wheels continues as an additional regular grounds contractor. In March 2022, we hired Craig Czaja to function as our cemetery services contractor. We expect Craig to assume more of the superintendent functions during the coming year.

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. The current board members are:

Board Members:

Lynn Callahan . President
Ann Freeman . Vice President
Stewart Joseph . Secretary
Kathy Calkins . Treasurer

Advisory Board Members:

Mary Thacher
George Avery
Fred Burdick
Bob Suppicich
Stuart Vyse

Shane Devine
Robert Hersh
Tim Hogen
Emeline McKeown
John Olmstead
Robert Simmons
Don Steinhoff
Tom Taylor

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 •

For the sixth year, the Board of Directors is happy to present a balanced budget. We spent much less than budgeted for FY2022. This was mostly due to an over prediction in expenses. The budget for the current year - FY 2023 - is \$147,500. The position of cemetery superintendent has been vacant March 2021. Ann and Lynn have been acting superintendents since then assessing the functions of the departed part-time superintendent, Mike Nolan. There has been a savings for the organization due to this vacancy, but the position has to be anticipated as a budget item for the future.

At the end of FY 2022 (June 30, 2022), the balance in the checking account was \$77,440. We no longer keep a separate savings account. The Mystic Management Asset Fund was at \$319,155.7 (\$286,935 invested + \$25,057 in cash). Our fund, like others, shrank this year after 5 years of steady growth. Last year we stood at \$363,976.36 (\$347,451.95 in funds + \$16,544.41 in cash). These numbers are 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. Our fund is managed by Mystic Asset Management with supervision by the Board of Directors. Details of our fund's investments are available upon request.

We believe this year's budget of \$147,500 is realistic - though less than last year's \$187,831.

On the expense side, we estimate we'll pay about \$50,000 for landscaping (an amount similar to last year) and \$12,000 for grave excavation. Although burials represent income, we don't receive the full amount of the fee, as we must pay our contractor for his services.

This cost increased with a change in contractors. We have increased burial prices to compensate. Administrative expenses are bookkeeping (\$5,000), insurance (\$4,000), and printing, postage, advertising and web services (\$6,500). In addition, we will pay \$2,000 for investment, banking and PayPal fees as well as the cost to host our cemetery software program.

We have spent more for tax preparation the past two years because we transferred our tax preparation and review account to Hoyt, Fileppetti and Malaghan. We feel that our finances are being more thoroughly reviewed as a result and that the credibility of this firm will be helpful for confidence in our organization.

We have budgeted \$32,000 for capital projects and preparation of new burial areas. These include expenses related to building improvements, roads, and expansion of burial areas.

A very important percentage of our income comes from the burial services and plot sales. Both are unpredictable. Last fiscal year, we raised \$31,000 in plot sales and \$27,800 in burial fees – less than we had hoped for. This year we hope to raise \$40,000 in plot sales \$30,000 in burial fees. As plots sales comprise such a significant portion of our annual income, the ability to offer plots in various locations in the cemetery is important. More scattered unsold plots have been located and

added to the inventory over the past two years. 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 2022, we received a total of \$46,184. This amount included some larger donations and those were invested in our fund. 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.

Without the generosity of our community the many improvement projects of the last several years would not have been possible.

The FY 2021-2022 budget is attached at the end of this report.

• Development •

During the past fiscal year, \$46,184 was raised as a result of our two appeals. This represents an increase over previous years. Our appeals are mailed to over 575 addresses. There were about 200 donors in FY 2022 – a bit fewer than the previous year.

During the past year, the SCA received a grant for \$5,000 from the Town of Stonington to assist with grounds maintenance. This an increase over previous years. We also received a \$3,000 grant from the Charles B. Allyn Foundation for assistance with digitizing our cemetery records.

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 11. There were 16 burials of cremated remains and 8 full burials.

The work of removing dying trees, grinding out the stumps and seeding those areas continued with work contracted to Tim Keena, Scott MacFadyen, and Elliott Shaw. Twenty-five trees were removed and the areas restored through removal of the trunks and seeding.

Bob Suppicich continues to clean headstones. He recently was gifted a trailer to carry water and supplies.

We improved the roadways with about 13 cubic yards of recycled asphalt donated by the Town of Stonington. Tim Keena transported and rolled out the material. The result is that several of the unpaved avenues and roads now have a paved surface that will make winter road upkeep easier and decrease road damage from runoff.

We also received permission from the Wetlands Commission to clear areas adjacent to an historic drainage ditch – once a spring – that runs under Route 1 and bisects our property along a north/south axis. The areas have been seeded and in future seasons will be mowed to reduce the growth of weeds and improve the cemetery’s appearance. Other unkept areas were cleared and have been seeded. These sections won’t be used for burial as they are all too close to wetlands.

We spent almost \$67,000 in FY 2022 on our grounds. This is in addition to volunteer hours. Much of this expense was long overdue maintenance, but also includes improvements such as the previously mentioned road work. Our 17 acres of historic cemetery grounds are expensive to maintain. We hope that attention over, the past several years, to long overdue maintenance projects will result in lower costs in the near future.

Work to restore the two historic sheds was finally be completed this fall. The final side of the Victorian shed was painted and a fixed fence to connect the rear of the two buildings was installed.

Thaler Hefel worked in December and July to the Route 1 facing stone wall of the West Grounds. While working on the wall, Thaler became interested in restoration work on the Billings Mausoleum. Although his estimate of \$100,000 to repair the masonry to prevent continued water leaking into the building is a figure that is much more manageable than the \$1,000,000 estimated by GNCB, it is still more than the board felt it could manage this fiscal year. It should be noted that Hefel’s estimate doesn’t include restoration of the decorative tin gutters or roof. Neither estimate includes stained glass repair.

GNCB’s 2020 engineering survey report is available upon request and can be found on our website at www.stoningtoncemetery.org.

We look to the community for guidance and direction regarding a Billings Restoration Project. At this time, the full energies of the board seem to be consumed by cemetery administration.

• Record Keeping •

During the past year, we began to populate the Cemsites software system that was purchased in 2021. The firm uploaded our data base – an expansion of the 2018 Case & Hicks inventory – into the system, but further work has been required to upload other records including death certificates, obituaries, plot owner information, veteran status, photos, etc. As with any bulk data transfer, records need to be corrected and/or clarified.

Francine Sullivan, hired through the Charles B. Allyn Foundation grant, has been assisting with data collection and uploading. Ann Freeman and Lynn Callahan have been verifying plot ownership and burial locations as well as identifying unsold plots.

The goal is to merge, clarify, and correct decades old paper records including maps and storing them all in our digital filing system so that one can quickly identify the location of owned plots, available plots, and over 4,700 known burials. We are finally on our way to realizing this project after 7 years of research and planning.

An important part of record keeping, especially as we look into the future, will be careful numbering of new burial areas. Craig Czaja continues to measure and number pin burial areas. Accurate measurement and numbering of plots has increased the number of available plots.

• Website & Communications •

The website continues to be useful for people 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. We hope to be more visible through Instagram in the coming year. Brochures at the entry gate are useful for first-time visitors. The seventh edition of the annual Tombstone Chronicles newsletter will be mailed in late November. We continue to use Constant Contact will help us to reach out to our membership.

Prior to 2015, the board didn't utilize any digital communications beyond the posting of a primitive website. It should be noted that, currently, all website and other e-communications are administered by the board. Expenses relating to communications – both print and digital are for printing, mailing, or web service charges only. It's not clear that the organization will be able to rely on board volunteers in the future to supply this service.

For two months from mid-July to mid-September, tours of the cemetery grounds were offered twice a week – Wednesdays and Sundays. We believe this additional form of community outreach is a valuable endeavor.

• 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. **2022:** *We feel that we ended this year with sufficient funds to cover an imaginable emergency. On the 50% of the managed fund for perpetual care.*
- A plan of development and the capital campaign required to prepare the West Grounds for burials. **2022:** *We have made progress, but do not yet have a final plan.*
- Funding to re-build our endowment. **2022:** *The fund has increased by over \$160,00 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. **2022:** *Implementation is in progress. The system is working and has already been helpful.*

- 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. **2022:** *GNCB survey and cost estimates were a first step in the preservation of the largest structure on the grounds – the Billings Mausoleum. Restoration of the wood buildings is complete. The Palmer Mausoleum is owned by the Palmer Society which plans to undertake repairs to the masonry. A large tree that the family felt a danger to the mausoleum was removed. The cost was shared.*
- Upkeep for all stones and monuments and the fence. **2022:** *Stone repair and righting is ongoing. The problem currently has less to do with funding than in finding competent repair firms. The granite ball missing from the right column of the front gate was replaced in December 2021. Buzzi Memorials helped with this expense to restore our historic front gates.*
- Various smaller projects including – signage for the West Grounds, new “street” signs, rubbish cans, professional attention to trees & shrubs including maintenance & new plantings. **2022:** *Some of this work is described in the report above. More projects have been completed than this board deemed possible.*
- 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
2022-2023 Budget

INCOME

	2023	2021-22 Actual-Budget		2020-21 Actual-Budget	
Gifts and Donations	\$40,000	\$46,184	\$35,000	43,403	\$30,000
Interest from Endowment	6,000	7,417	6,000	6,915	5,500
Sale of Lots	40,000	31,000	70,000	37,538	37,538
Fees for Burial Services	30,000	27,800	35,000	28,000	28,000
Grants	5,000	6,000	5,000	12,800	12,800
Other Income & Interest	0	0	0	0	0
Transfer from Accumulated Revenue*	\$26,500		\$36,831	40,062	40,062
TOTAL INCOME \$121,000 +\$26,500	\$147,500	\$118,401	\$187,831	\$166,237	\$153,900

EXPENSES

Administrative					
	2023	2021-22 Actual-Budget		2020-21 Actual-Budget	
Bookkeeping: Marilyn Buck	\$5,000	\$4,600	\$5,000	\$4,250	\$5,000
Accounting: Financials/Tax Preparation	2,000	4,000	4,000	975	1,000
Banking & Mystic Asset Fees & Pay Pal	2,000	1,489	2,000	1,086	1,000
Supplies/Printing/Postage/Advertising/Web	6,500	5,337	4,600	4,746	3,500
Insurance	4,100	4,086	3,500	3,358	3,400
General Services: Misc Expenses & Returns	2,000	1,500	3,000	2,250	2,100
Transfer to Endowment**	5,000	0	0	0	0
Total Administrative	\$26,600	\$21,012	\$22,100	\$16,865	\$26,000

Grounds – Maintenance & Utilities					
	2023	2020-21 Actual-Budget		2020-21 Actual-Budget	
Landscaping:Lawn/Trees/Leaf Removal/Roads	\$50,000	\$60,274	\$50,000	\$44,814	\$43,000
Miscellaneous: General Maintenance	5,000	6,949	5,000	3,995	9,000
Utilities&Services:Electricity/Phone/Dmpstr	1,900	1,867	1,900	1,729	1,600
Grounds – Burial Sales & Services					
Interment Services – Czaja/Kenyon	\$12,000	\$9,750	\$9,000	\$8,000	\$17,000
Cemetery Superintendent	10,000	0	19,831	0	0
Total Grounds	\$78,900	\$78,840	\$85,731	\$58,538	\$70,900

Capital Projects					
	2023	2021-2022 Actual-Budget		2020-21 Actual-Budget	
Restoration Projects*	\$12,000	9,950	\$20,000	\$16,424	\$17,000
Preparation for New Burial Areas	30,000	6,600	60,000	37,577	40,000
Total Capital Projects	\$42,000	\$16,550	\$80,000	\$54,000	57,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$147,500	\$116,402	\$187,831	\$129,405	\$153,900
NET INCOME		\$1,999		\$36,831	

Account status as of 30 June 2022: Checking - \$77,439.88 | Management Fund - \$319,155.97 (\$286,935.10 invested + \$25,056.87 in cash)

*Transfer from checking. **Gift from donor

Net Income: \$1,999 + \$77,439.88 = \$79,448