

Oregon Commission on Historic Cemeteries

Minutes

July 16, 2020



BUSINESS MEETING: 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Location: Conference call

OCHC Business Meeting

1. Welcome and Introductions – 1:00
 - a. Commissioners – Bev Power, Milo Reed, Charlotte Lehan, Sarah Silbernagel
 - b. Staff – Jamie French, Kuri Gill
2. Approval Minutes (June) 1:05
 - a. Minutes approved with no changes. Moved: Silbernagel Seconded: Reed Approved
3. Public Comment – for items not on the agenda
 - a. Cricket Soules – Marshfield Cemetery, Coos Bay. They have finished the Travel Oregon grant project, they were great to work with. Infographic, panel, etc. They have had people visit and appreciate the panel and information.
4. Commissioner appointments update 1:25
 - a. Scott Stuemke resigned in June, Valerie Vines Magee resigned in July. We currently have four appointed members. Recruitment for coastal, central/southeast and Tribal perspective will begin in August.
5. Acknowledging unmarked graves document 1:30
 - a. Charlotte will do additional edits and we will review at the next meeting.
6. Confederate Flags in Historic Cemeteries position paper 1:35
 - a. Present the language – Kuri Gill
 - b. Public Comment – limit to three minutes per person; no public comment
 - c. Dr. Otis W. Pickett – Provided background on the history of Confederate Flag practices. He has spent a lot of time in Oregon and offered thanks for having him. He provided the history of the flag origination and use over the decades. It was as the flag of Northern Virginia, regiment. He provided more information about secession position and what the flag stands for. The flag stands with an ideological position that is pro-slavery, based on secession statements. Memorial Day was a celebration of freedom. He provided information about “The lost cause”, which distances the confederacy from slavery during reconstruction. This is the time when monuments came to be. And books were edited to remove slavery from the connection. The symbol is connected racialized control and has been used for this purpose for decades: for state flags (state used it as a response to civil rights successes); in cultural arenas, like Birth of a Nation; KKK used it in the 1930s. It is important to understand the ongoing history and use of the flag.
 - i. Question – Asked to provide comments about decoration of gravesites where people are interred. Consider first national flag, regimental flag, putting a confederate flag may not even be historically accurate to the context of their service, they may have been elsewhere. The flags put out are more a product of the lost cause than the civil war and 1865.
 - ii. What do folks do in the south to celebrate confederate soldiers? Monuments, confederate memorial month (April), Confederate Memorial Day, battlefield (flags and flowers), look at where buried are from, and choose the state’s day. Secession day.
 - iii. Recommended resources. *Dixies Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* by Karen Cox. *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* by Stephanie McCurry. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*

- by David Blight.
- d. Commission discussion
 - i. Memorial Day– For those that died while defending US, many conflicts were not in defense of the US. Many actions were for land. It is to commemorate solders that lost their lives, that may have been true when it was established. But, by 1900 many solders graves are being decorated because they died of old age. It is all veterans who are decorated, not just those that died in battle.
 - ii. The document needs to be more clear in the sections, Memorial Day is a part of the position, but not the only thing.
 - iii. Make this more substantial, include some of this history. Take a position on allowing the flag, but give additional recommendations for alternatives.
 - iv. Sarah has another reference to add.
 - v. Heart goes out to the majority of cemeteries that are small and don't have much legal capacity like a city. Concerned about the legal issues with this. We want to be sure, to keep this in mind.
 - vi. Sarah – asked thoughts on adding Veterans Day, and anything missing. Veterans Day is largely focused on living veterans.
- e. Commission vote – no vote, looking for more editing.
- 7. Cemetery Stories Discussion & Workplan 2:50
 - a. Update from each commissioner on their work on this project
 - i. Lehan – committed to two stories – Not done yet, will work on the marking unmarked graves document.
 - ii. Reed – look into connecting existing stories online to historic cemeteries – Contacted the Multnomah County Library to make an agreement to coordinate OCHC story effort with their resources. Using the Our Story collection, to take items and expand on a theme, and possibly include the gallery as well.
 - iii. Silbernagel – submit one story – She will do something on the Ritter cemetery, took photographs of her headstone, down the road was a house, it was her house.
 - iv. Power – submitted one story
- 8. Commissioner action reports and issues for the commission 3:10
 - a. Lehan – No new action
 - b. Reed – Story sharing project – library was looking at purchasing the Oregon Journal and it is online, and mind blowing. I really good resource, 1902-1982, democrat paper. Different view point. Worked on exhibit at OHS, related to the Timbers Army. To reach the stories people are working on, throw a name at him, he will help.
 - c. Silbernagel – report on GPS project, invasive species effort – Worked on position paper and will start on the GPR document.
 - d. Power – Story sharing project – Bev re-thinking what is a story, if you stand in a certain place in the mausoleum you can hear people out in the cemetery. Had meeting with Central Point, to find out about the cemetery. The city is seriously considering taking it over.
- 9. Items for future meetings 3:25
 - a. SOLVE outreach
 - b. Invasive species – position paper, bulletins, partnerships
 - c. Other
- 10. Upcoming Meetings & Workshops 3:45
 - October 23 – 1:00-4:00 teleconference
 - February 5 – 1:00 – 4:00 teleconference
 - April 29 – 9:00-11:30, with the Oregon Heritage Summit in The Dalles, possibly teleconference due to budget and COVID.