

**Minutes of the Darien Monuments and Ceremonies
Commission: June 9, 2015**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Phil Kraft at 3:30 PM.

Commissioners in attendance: Phil Kraft, Chairman; David Polett, Vice Chairman; Karen Polett, Secretary; Terry Gaffney, Treasurer; Charles Scribner, Becky Siciliano, George Walsh, and Marian Castell, Town Historian, Ex-Officio. Also attending were Sharad Samy of the Darien Post 6933 VFW, and Wes Haynes of the Connecticut Trust.

Minutes of the prior meeting were accepted on a motion by T. Gaffney, seconded by D. Polett.

VFW Building (The Fitch Home Chapel)

Mr. Haynes was given the floor to discuss options for the Fitch Home Chapel (current VFW building) refurbishment funding. CT Trust is a private group that partners with the State Historical Preservation Office on awarding grants to projects deemed deserving and under their purview. He described the steps necessary to apply for funding through his group, specifying deadlines and procedures to be followed. Most of the steps require matching grants to reach fruition. Matching funds cannot be from other State Funds, they can however be from Federal or Town funds.

The Monuments and Ceremonies Commission offered a “vote of confidence” in the main goal of the VFW and the Town Historian, of obtaining funds for on-going projects at the Chapel. Although this does not fall directly under the MCC charge,

we felt it was a worthwhile project to pursue, and chose to register our support, limited as it may be, for the endeavor.

Commissioner D. Polett suggested that the VFW set up a committee to oversee all parts of the fund raising project for the Chapel, a truly significant building in the history of the United States, as well as the State of Connecticut and the Town of Darien. Interested individuals and representatives of local organizations, should be sought out and brought together to comprise this entity. It was also suggested that once a fund raising strategy was in place, assistance by the press should be looked into, especially David Drury of the Hartford Courant who wrote a piece on the Fitch Home which was published last year. Since he expressed an interest in the undertaking, Terry Gaffney was asked by Phil to appear at the VFW meeting to be held on June 10th to follow up.

Memorial Day Parade and Ceremony at Spring Grove

Discussion of the parade was limited as the representatives of the Parade Committee, although invited, were not in attendance.

Mention was made of the Cub Scouts distributing candy mints along the parade route and this is specifically prohibited. Safety is the primary concern. Distribution of anything by parade participants has long been prohibited. In addition, the Special Olympics participants were seen to be strung out over an inordinate distance from their lead elements. With cars coming up behind them there is a safety issue here as well. Perhaps, as has been suggested in the past, these participants should ride in a vehicle so as to keep the line-of-march moving.

All agreed that the Spring Grove Ceremony was one of the best we have had to date. The speaker, Christopher Pintauro, was outstanding. The poem read by the essay winner was very moving. The Patriot Brass Ensemble, sponsored by the Masonic Club of Darien, once again played on the dais after the parade and attracted a large crowd to the ceremony. Those to be thanked by letter include: essay winner and his teacher, to be done by Terry Gaffney; speaker, Springdale Florist (Mickey Doyle), and Rebecca Siciliano (umbrellas), to be done by Karen Polett.

The addition of umbrellas, donated by Commissioner Becky Siciliano proved to be a good move as our Grand Marshal, Gene Coyle, used one to shelter from the bright, hot sun. Our Congressman Terrie Wood also used one. The platform location can be challenging if the sun is strong. We will try to get a couple more umbrellas for next year. Phil Kraft suggested purchasing a runner to place on the deck in front of the dignitaries. This might cut down on the reflected heat. He will look into it. The Noroton Fire Department has lent us the chairs for the platform each year. Since they have a gathering after the parade they need the chairs back at the Fire House. Rental or purchase of 24 chairs will be explored by Phil Kraft and Terry Gaffney, who indicated that had he known, the Scout tag sale often has chairs donated that may have been just what we are looking for. Water for the platform dignitaries will again be provided since it is necessary in the heat.

Applications for the Display Case

Charles Scribner asked for the use of the case for the summer months by the Andrew Shaw Memorial Trust. Granted.

Karen Polett asked for the use of the case by the Daughters of the American Revolution for September. Granted. Application approved.

Terry Gaffney asked if the photos in the case currently (past parades) should be kept by the Commission for future use. The answer is yes as they were given to us by Ken Reiss for just such a purpose.

Flag Day Ceremony

Since Flag Day occurs on Sunday this year, there will be no formal ceremony in front of the Town Hall.

DAR Patriot Memorial

Fund raising has begun and the Memorial will be dedicated in September, with the placement of a marker in the Veterans' Circle in front of Town Hall. The date will be confirmed over the summer.

Alex Mitchell Eagle Scout Project

Alex compiled a meticulous listing with maps, of all the veterans buried in Spring Grove Cemetery, complete with branch of service. This is an amazing accomplishment by a dedicated Boy Scout. He is to be commended. Phil Kraft was his advisor on the project.

Push-Pull Parade

Now under the sponsorship of the Darien VFW Post 6933, as per Phil Kraft.

September 11 Ceremony (9/11)

The usual roles were discussed and assigned. Karen will get the wreath and two dozen roses from Springdale Florist. Phil will confirm the Middle School has flags, and that the site has been prepared properly.

Next Meeting : September 8, 2015

No meetings in July and August as per custom.

Submitted by,

Karen Kreitzberger Polett

Secretary