



REPORT

CITY OF HARTSVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA
COUNCIL AFRICAN-AMERICAN CEMETERY COMMITTEE
JULY 31, 2017 AT 3:00 PM
COUNCIL CHAMBERS – CITY HALL – 100 EAST CAROLINA AVENUE

Committee Members Present: Adlena Graham, Chair; Johnny Andrews
Guests Present: Willie Williams, Pecolia Grove, Jennifer Heusel
Staff Present: Mary Catherine Farrell

PURSUANT TO FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT SC CODE 30-4-80: WRITTEN NOTICE WAS DELIVERED TO THE PRESS BY EMAIL ON SUNDAY, JULY 30, 2017 AND DULY POSTED AT CITY HALL LOCATED AT 100 E. CAROLINA AVE.

Councilman Graham called the meeting to order at 3:07 pm, opening with a prayer.

The following matters were discussed:

Staff reported that donations raised to date totaled \$4,765. Staff shared Mrs. Marva (Burno) Serrano's success at sending a personal letter to her family to solicit funds, which has incurred four donations to date. Serrano, who serves remotely on the committee, recommended that Committee members and those interested in supporting the cause send personalized letters to their family members.

The Committee members had no fundraising updates.

Jennifer Heusel, professor of communications at Coker College, joined the group to share her ideas for engaging her students to help market the fundraising and preservation efforts. Ms. Heusel would serve as project manager, and act as liaison between the Committee and her students. Her vision is that students conduct research and record interviews with those connected to the Cemetery to create videos that can be posted on the City's website and social media pages, as well as other groups' social media pages, to raise awareness and target a broader fundraising audience. She will follow up with Councilman Andrews (already spoke with Councilwoman Graham and staff) to get additional information on the Cemetery history and preservation progress before the next Committee meeting.

Councilman Andrews shared that Mrs. Renee Brown-Bryant, resident of Georgia who has committed much time and energy to the Cemetery preservation project and the research of those known/suspected to be buried there, found a reference to a picture of the cemetery while reading the book *Growing Up in the Brown House*, by Mary Coker Joslin. On page 89, the author referenced a photograph taken of her mother while working with members of a female African American garden club she founded to landscape "an African American cemetery in our community". Andrews will work to track down this photograph. Additionally, Graham and Andrews discussed the possibility that one-time members of the May Roper Coker Garden Club (referenced in the book) might still be alive and may have some records of the garden club if any were kept. Copies of the relevant book passage were distributed to meeting attendees.

Andrews also updated the group with his finding that the state statute he was tasked with researching at the previous meeting, allowing cities to use public monies for work on abandoned private cemeteries, was passed in 1989. This confirms the timeline that while the City Council made a commitment in the 1970s to maintain the Cemetery, and Mr. Wilmont Berry reminded the 1982 Council of their predecessors' obligation, the law allowing this was not passed until 1989 and no action was ever taken.

Andrews also posed a question for the group's research and consideration: Was there a mutual burial association (burial insurance of sorts) for Hartsville African-Americans? These were common in the era in other towns, and if one did exist, then they would have kept burial records that could be used in identifying Cemetery burials.

Heusel shared that she would request of the Butler Heritage Foundation Board permission to post updates to the group's Facebook page to promote the Cemetery fundraising efforts and progress made.

The next meeting will be held Monday, August 28 at 3:00pm in City Hall Council Chambers.

Councilwoman Graham closed the meeting at 3:59 pm.

This is our report and recommendations to the full Council.

Adlena Graham, Committee Chair