

VIRGINIA BEACH HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Planning and Community Development Conference Room, 2875 Sabre Street, Suite 500

December 1, 2021, 5:00 pm

Approved January 5, 2022 as amended

Present:

Officers: Chair, James Wood; First Vice-Chair, Sharon Prescott; Second Vice-Chair, Mac Rawls; Secretary, Bobbie Gribble

Members: Campbell Clay, Sharon Felton, Natalie Hubbard, Richard Klobuchar, Becky Livas, Christi Lyons, Timothy Oksman, Katie Paulson

Staff: Mark Reed

Presenter: Debra McClane (via virtual connection)

Purpose The purpose of the Commission is to advise the City Council and the Department of Planning and Community Development and museums on all issues related to the preservation of historic buildings, structures, and sites located in the City of Virginia Beach

Mission The mission of the Commission shall be to preserve, protect and maintain the historic identity of Virginia Beach and the former Princess Anne County through a program of advocacy and increased public awareness and involvement

Welcome/Introductions/Remarks

Jimmy Wood welcomed everyone to the meeting. He asked Mark Reed to introduce the speaker. Mr. Reed introduced Debra McClane, Architectural Historian, who joined the meeting virtually. He said she has been contracted to prepare a Preliminary Information Form on the Newsome Farm Cemetery and is here today to make a presentation to the Commission on the project.

Presentation – Newsome Farm Cemetery – PIF (see PowerPoint slide in Appendix 1)

Debra McClane made a presentation on her preparation of a Preliminary Information Form on the Newsome Farm Cemetery. She noted that it was originally identified as needing additional investigation in the 2018 Architectural Resources Survey Update for the northern half of Virginia Beach. She said it came to Mr. Reed's attention when Code Enforcement contacted him and asked who owned the cemetery, Mr. Reed researched it and discovered that no one owns it, and no one may have ever owned it. It went back to the 1880s.

Ms. McClane said it is thought that if it can be listed in the National Register, it will raise the cemetery's profile and will create interest in maintaining it. She said it is included in the recently published Virginia African American Cultural Center's brochure about local African American sites, so it is receiving some attention.

Ms. McClane said the cemetery is located in the Newsome Farm neighborhood at the corner of Daniel Smith Road and Coffee Court. She said it has the image of a park and is very low profile. The Newsome Farm neighborhood is in the northwestern part of the city, in the Kempsville District near the border of Bayside. Newtown Road is on the western edge of the neighborhood and Baker Road is on the south.

It was surveyed as one of 12 historically African American communities in the 2018 architectural survey. In Newsome Farm there were not that many historic resources standing. A few were documented in addition to the cemetery. Ms. McClane noted that the cemetery does not have a formal layout, so she put one together for survey purposes for this project. Her layout consists of seven rows.

The graves are oriented east to west, which is traditional. There are various types of markers including typical headstones and vault covers (concrete covers over the burial shafts). She said there are also several sites where a flag was there or artificial flowers that might indicate a burial without a headstone.

Ms. McClane noted some of the details for the markers.

- o The vault covers are molded on some of the graves, with an inset concrete marker with the name or date, plus at the bottom is often a concrete marker that had the name of the funeral home.
- o The oldest marker is for Chancy Alan Cornick, who died November 1, 1888 (22 years) The most recent marker is for Alberta Wiggins, March 1916 – 1990.
- o There are two United States Colored Troops (USCT) markers - Edward Phelps, Co C, 36th USCT and William Todd, Co H, 37th USCT. She said in her research she found service records and pension records. She thinks this is a great future research project.

In addressing the condition of the cemetery, Ms. McClane said there is no evidence of vandalism. Some vault markers are sinking into the ground. She said that only one marker is broken, but she doesn't think this is vandalism. She speculated that a tree limb may have fallen on it. Ms. McClane said there are 40 gravestones, 5 presumed burials, 6 areas of possible unmarked graves, and 5 locations of brick/glass scatters.

Ms. McClane provided some historical background on Newsome Farm. She said it extends to 1869 when 5 formally enslaved African American men purchased a 200-acre tract and formed a partnership or association. They pooled their resources and then sold parcels (rent or mortgage). Over time, some of the trustees died and conveyed their interest and some sold their interest. Barry Cornick was acting as President of the association. The Treasurer brought a Chancery suit against the other two trustees because he wanted to see an accounting. It showed that 36 people who had paid interest into the property. Eventually, the suit resulted in production of a plat in 1887. In that plat, each lot has a name, acreage, and lot number. If it had not been for the Chancery suit we might not have had this information.

Ms. McClane said William Todd had served in the USCT and he had been paying into the association with the property. After he died his wife exercised the right to purchase the plot. By 1887 it looks like the cemetery might have been established. It was very likely a community graveyard. Perhaps intended for the Newsome Farm community. It is noted as an exception in the lot in the deed for Mr. Todd's widow.

Ms. McClane said that Newsome Farm was a neglected African American neighborhood as far as having infrastructure improvements. In the 1970s it came under the Target Community program and upgrades were made to water, sewer, stormwater drainage and roads. This made the neighborhood more desirable for modern development so very few of the historic resources survive. In the center has remained the cemetery.

Ms. McClane said that Newsome Farm Cemetery is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A, broad patterns of history, for Community Planning and Development; Ethnic Heritage – Black; and Social History. She said it is also eligible under Criterion D, likely to yield information, because it has the potential to provide information on a particular cultural group. She said it also is eligible under Criterion Consideration D, cemeteries.

A cemetery is eligible if it derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events. Ms. McClane said Newsome Farm Cemetery is a symbol of post-Civil War economic advancement of African Americans. She noted that Barry Cornick was an original trustee and the sole surviving trustee. He had been enslaved by Thomas Land and purchased the property 4 years after the Civil War ended.

Ms. McClane said she is waiting for a little bit of research on the Cuffeytown Cemetery in Chesapeake to see if there are any applicable comparisons. She said she couldn't find any other African American cemeteries in VCRIS that weren't either associated with a church, a city cemetery with a section for African American burials or specific families. Cuffeytown may be the closest to a community cemetery like at Newsome Farm. She noted it has 13 USCT burials.

Ms. McClane said we are close to being ready to submit the PIF. She noted that when we do, DHR staff will review it, score it and then take it to the evaluation team. A preliminary evaluation will be provided. She said we will hear if it is considered eligible for listing. If determined eligible by DHR staff, the PIF will go to the State Review Board.

Mr. Wood asked what the plan is for ownership of the cemetery. Mr. Reed said it remains complicated. He noted that the City usually seeks ownership of properties due to lack of payment of taxes. That isn't the issue here. He said ownership by a non-profit organization would be the best scenario, but it probably would require going through a process with the Circuit Court.

Mr. Wood asked the Underrepresented Communities Committee to look at this issue and suggest options for the Commission to recommend or support.

Becky Livas asked Ms. McClane if she had talked to the direct descendants of those interred in the cemetery. Ms. McClane said she had not and noted that should be part of the research process should the PIF be successful in making the case for eligibility. She said a lot of those that are buried there were members of St. Johns AME Church and Ebenezer Baptist Church, so there should be good avenues for identifying related families.

Mr. Wood thanked Ms. McClane for her presentation and for her work on the Newsome Farm PIF.

Approval of November 3, 2021 Minutes

Mr. Wood asked the members present to review the minutes of the November 3 meeting. Sharon Prescott made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Sharon Felton seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Nominating Committee

Mr. Wood noted that the bylaws call for the presentation of a slate of officers at the December meeting by the Nominating Committee. He said the nominating committee consisted of Bill Gambrell, Harriet Frenzel, and Christi Lyons.

Mr. Wood said the bylaws are set up so that the Immediate Past Chair is also seated on the Executive Committee. He said Bill Gambrell is the Immediate Past Chair and he will be rotating off the Commission at the end of the year. Mr. Wood noted that the bylaws will need to be changed to indicate the most recent past chair that is still a member on the commission will sit on the Executive Committee.

The following slate of officers for 2022 was presented:

- Chair – Jimmy Wood
- 1st Vice-Chair – Sharon Prescott
- 2nd Vice Chair – Christi Lyons
- Secretary – Bobbie Gribble

Committee Reports

Campbell Clay and Natalie Hubbard reported for the Student Leaders Committee. Mr. Clay said the November meeting went well. The main topic was the student's Clio entries. He said they went over what a good introductory paragraph would look like. They also discussed ways to get reliable sources, such as libraries, and National Register nominations, during their research.

Ms. Hubbard said the goal for the December meeting is to have a few entries done and entered before the holiday break. She said they will then move on to working on the Scavenger Hunt in the spring.

Project Updates

Mr. Reed provided updates on several ongoing projects.

He said that the Historic and Cultural District Design Guidelines are coming down the home stretch. He said staff and the consultant provided a briefing to the Planning Commission on November 10 that was well-received. He noted that he expects they will return to the Planning Commission in January 2022 for action. That is basically to adopt the Design Guidelines by reference to the Comprehensive Plan and to amend the ordinance to update the existing code to reference the Design Guidelines. After that will be a City Council briefing and their final action.

Mr. Reed reported on the Historic Preservation Strategic Plan. He said staff met with DHR and Commonwealth Preservation Group (CPG) to review comments from Planning staff, the Historic Preservation Commission, and the Steering Committee. He said DHR is now reviewing the revised Objectives and Actions that Mr. Reed had put together and he expects they will have a discussion about them next week. Once they have finalized the language for the Objectives and Actions, they will be submitted to CPG for them to prepare a proposal to complete the project.

Mr. Reed then reported on the several National Register Nominations that are underway. He noted that for L&J Gardens the first draft of the nomination is underway and the project still is on track for the June 2022 meeting of the State Review Board and the Board of Historic Resources. He said the Seatack nomination is just a step behind and the neighborhood survey has been completed. The project is on track for September 2022. For Woodhurst, a Purchase Requisition has been submitted in the amount of \$14,832 and Debra McClane, Architectural Historian, has been selected as the consultant. That project will get underway in February

Mr. Reed addressed the PIF projects that are in process. He said that the Cutty Sark Motel has been recommended eligible by DHR staff and is on the December 9 State Review Board agenda.

Mr. Reed said that DHR's staff evaluation team had reviewed the Blue Marlin Motel and determined that it is not eligible. He said that he and Ms. McClane had a conference call with Marc Wagner, the architectural historian, and Lena McDonald, the National Register historian, at DHR and had a discussion about the potential eligibility. DHR staff said the main issue was the 2nd story that was added on in 1977. He said Ms. McClane shared some photos to show the new addition left much of the original intact.

Mr. Reed said that he and Ms. McClane are scheduled to do a presentation to the evaluation team tomorrow. He said it is hopeful Marc Wagner will score it higher given the information that Ms. McClane had presented. They will know more tomorrow once they make the presentation. If it is determined eligible Mr. Reed expects that it will go to March State Review Board meeting. If it is not found eligible, they will ask it to be placed on the agenda to make their case to the entire Board.

For the Chesapeake Beach Historic District PIF, the DHR Staff evaluation team also found this to be not eligible. Mr. Reed said he and Ms. McClane have asked for the DHR staff to attend a site visit so they can get a better view of the neighborhood. Mr. Reed said they knew the boundaries were going to be an issue in this neighborhood and we are hoping that we can make some adjustment to the boundaries and have a cohesive district that is eligible.

Mr. Reed noted that the Commission just heard most of the details on the Newsome Farm Cemetery PIF. He said the final draft for the PIF is nearing completion.

For the Pleasant Ridge School Mr. Reed said that the kickoff meeting is still pending. He said the consultant had some surgery early in November and the contact with the school also had some health issues so they will get it underway once everyone has recovered.

Historic Properties Glimpse

Mark Reed discussed upcoming hearing items for the Historical Review Board (HRB) meeting scheduled on December 15.

Mr. Reed said the Building 1 renovations at the Municipal Center that he discussed at the Commission's November meeting had been deferred due to issues for the setback for the wall and loading dock area. He said this needs to be resolved before the HRB hears the item. He noted that because the building is on a corner, the side facing North Landing Road is considered the front yard. Mr. Reed said the HRB has done a site visit. The area that is proposed for renovations will include a large transformer and generator plus spaces for large trucks. There is no other side of the building that can reasonably accommodate this activity and equipment.

Mr. Reed discussed a Veterinarian Office that is proposed in the Courthouse District on North Landing Road. He said this was previously approved by the HRB in December 2020 for 8,000 square feet. The applicant is bringing forward a revised plan for a 12,000 square foot building. He noted that the design is similar to what was approved, but it is 50% larger.

Finally, Mr. Reed said that there are two new business signs proposed in a retail area in the Francis Land House District. The signs are for Ezma's Bread Box Café and will be placed in existing illuminated sign boxes above the business entrance.

Mr. Reed then provided an update on the proposed Nimmo Church Welcome Center addition. The HRB had denied the Certificate of Appropriateness and the applicant had appealed the denial. The hearing for the appeal was scheduled for the December 7 City Council meeting. Mr. Reed said that today the applicant withdrew the appeal so it will not go forward. He noted that the applicant is expected to return with an alternative design for the proposed welcome center addition.

Mr. Reed said that the red wash application on the historic Princess Anne County Courthouse building has been completed. He said he has stopped by to look at the finished project and in his opinion he thinks it pulls the building together. Mac Rawls said that it was a great article on it in the Virginian-Pilot. Mr. Reed concurred and said it was great placement on the front page above the fold.

Old Business

Under old business, Jimmy Wood presented a draft policy for Commission members to participate in meetings remotely (see Appendix 2). Mr. Wood said this is a policy developed by the City Attorney for another board and he has simply inserted the Commission's name for the other board. He said the most important thing to note is it is not a virtual meeting policy. This only allows Commission members to join the meeting remotely; however, there must be a quorum physically present in the meeting room. Mr. Wood said that attending remotely for a personal reason (not medical) is limited to two meetings a year or a percentage of the number of meetings, whichever is greater. The policy allows members that are attending remotely to vote on Commission matters.

A motion was made by Tim Oksman to adopt the policy as presented. The motion was seconded by Rick Klobuchar. There was not additional discussion. The policy was adopted by a unanimous vote.

Mr. Reed said he would work on developing a process for implementation of the policy.

New Business

Under new business, Mr. Reed asked the Commission if they were interested in requesting a mayoral proclamation for African American Heritage Month in February 2022. He said for the last several February's the Commission has asked the Mayor to proclaim African American Heritage Month in Virginia Beach. He noted that the nationwide theme in 2022 is Black Health & Wellness.

Tim Oksman made a motion for staff to proceed with developing a proclamation for African American Heritage Month for February 2022. The motion was seconded by Rick Klobuchar. There was no additional discussion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Jimmy Wood then said he wanted to recognize Bill Gambrell. He noted that Mr. Gambrell is completing his terms and has been on the Commission since January 1, 2009. Mr. Wood stated that the leadership of Bill, Mac, Harriet, and Glenn Carwell put us in the position where we are now. He said that Mr. Gambrell rotating off is a big loss for the Commission.

Mr. Wood said Bill has put his money where his mouth is when it comes to historic preservation. He noted that Bill took over as chair right after we reached the Certified Local Government (CLG) status and shepherded us through several large projects to ensure compliance with the CLG agreement including undertaking the architectural survey updates. As part of this he led the Commission in putting a focus on underrepresented communities. Mr. Wood noted that Bill is the only Chair that has won an award. We received the Katherine Glaize Rockwood Award for community preservation from Preservation Virginia during his tenure.

Mr. Wood said he wished Mr. Gambrell was here today so he could thank him for his service, leadership and time. He proposed that the Commission recommend a resolution to recognize Bill Gambrell from the city. He said we can get Councilperson Rosemary Wilson to sponsor it. Rick Klobuchar made a motion to request the City Council to adopt a resolution recognizing Bill Gambrell for his work in Historic Preservation. Tim Oksman seconded the motion. The Commission approved the motion.

Adjournment

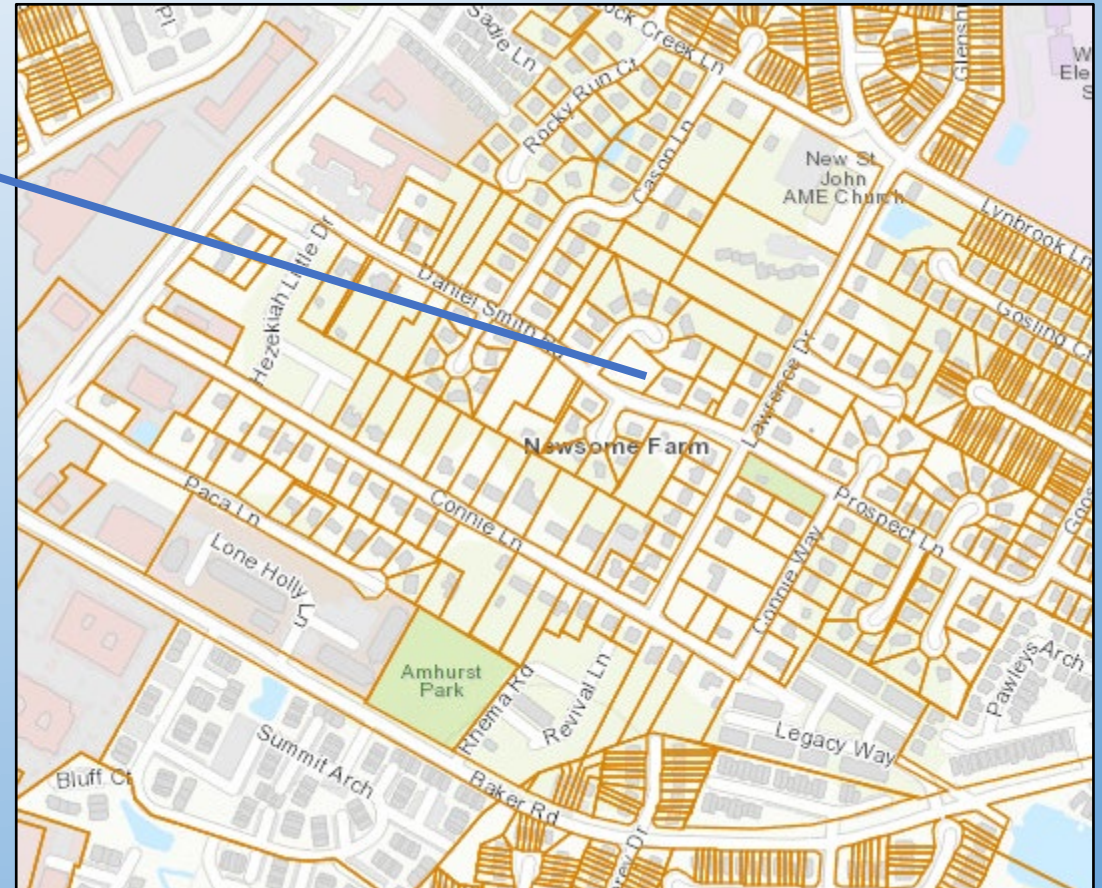
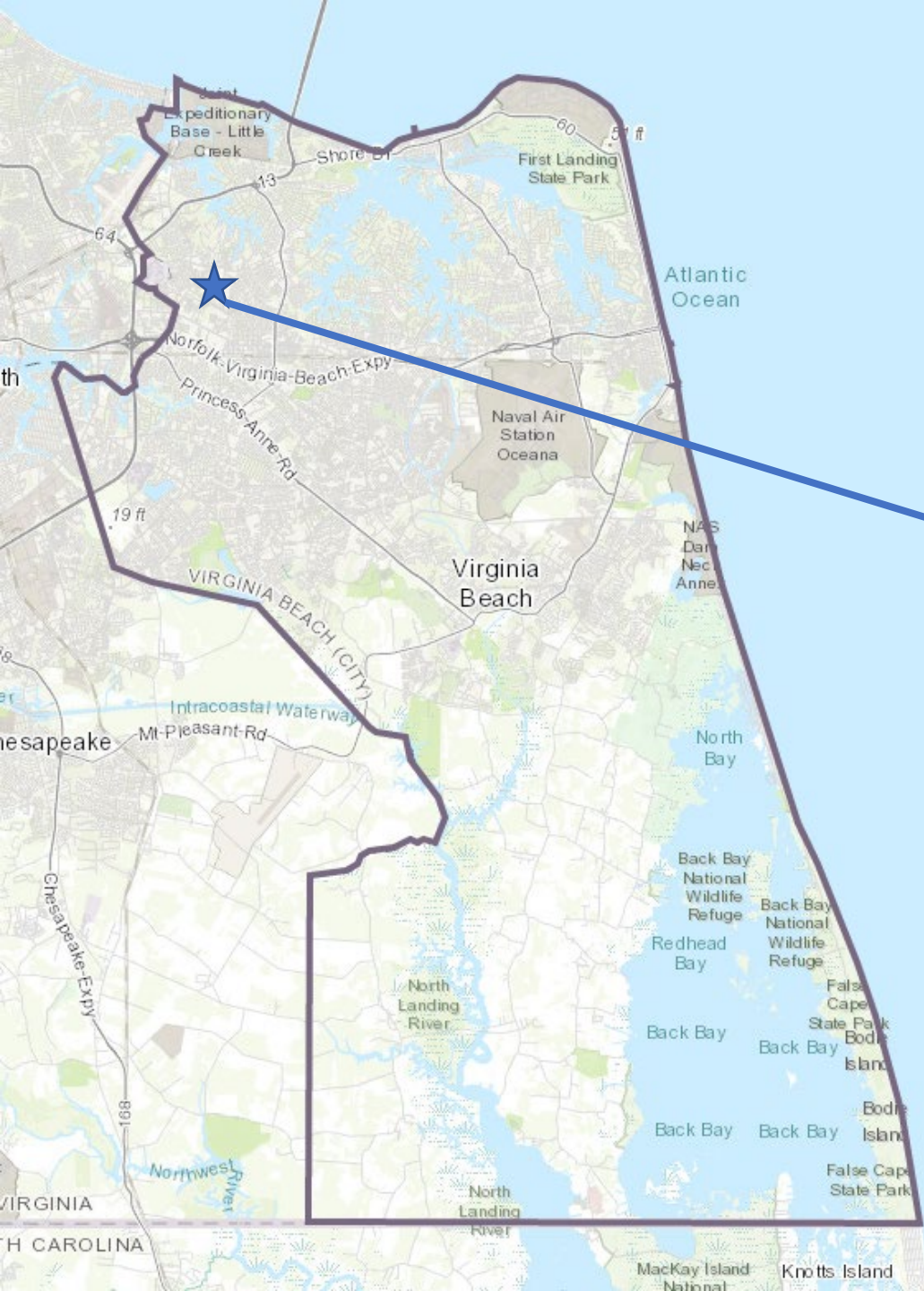
Mr. Wood said the next meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission will be on Wednesday, January 5, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.



Newsome Farm Cemetery
Preliminary Information Form

Debra A. McClane, Architectural Historian

Newsome Farm Cemetery (VDHR #134-5670) Daniel Smith Road and Coffee Court Kempsville District



HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY UPDATE CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA NORTHERN HALF



PREPARED FOR
Mr. Mark A. Reed
Historic Preservation Commission
Department of Planning and Community Development
City of Virginia Beach, Virginia

PREPARED BY

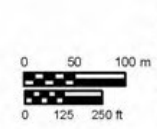


In partnership with
DEBRA A. McCLANE
Architectural Historian



LEGEND

- Study Area
- Neighborhood Boundary
- Neighborhood Resource
- Street



V18C002 (17SEPT2018) JHK



5440 Connie Lane, 1940



5521 Connie Lane, 1933



Newsome Farm Cemetery



Oldest Marker



Chancy Alan Cornick, Died Nov. 1, 1888
Age 22 yrs.

Most Recent Marker



U.S. Colored Troop Markers



Edward Phelps, Co C, 36th USCT











William Todd, Co H, 37th USCT



Newsome Farm Cemetery
Virginia Beach
134-5670

Legend

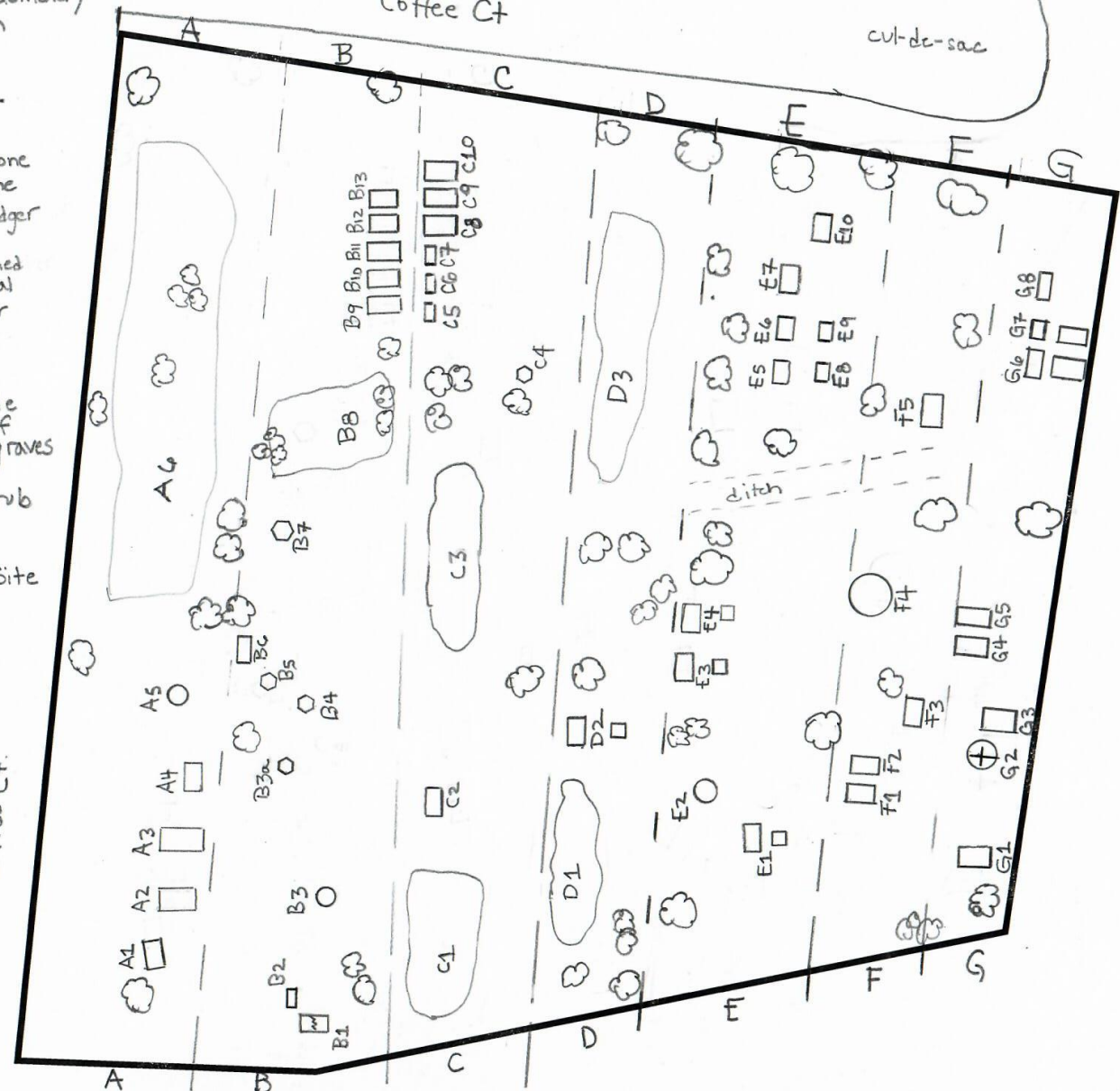
NTS

-  headstone
-  footstone
-  vault/ledger
-  presumed burial
-  scatter
-  cross
-  possible area of unmarked graves
-  tree/shrub
- A Row
- A1 Grave/Site

Coffee Ct.

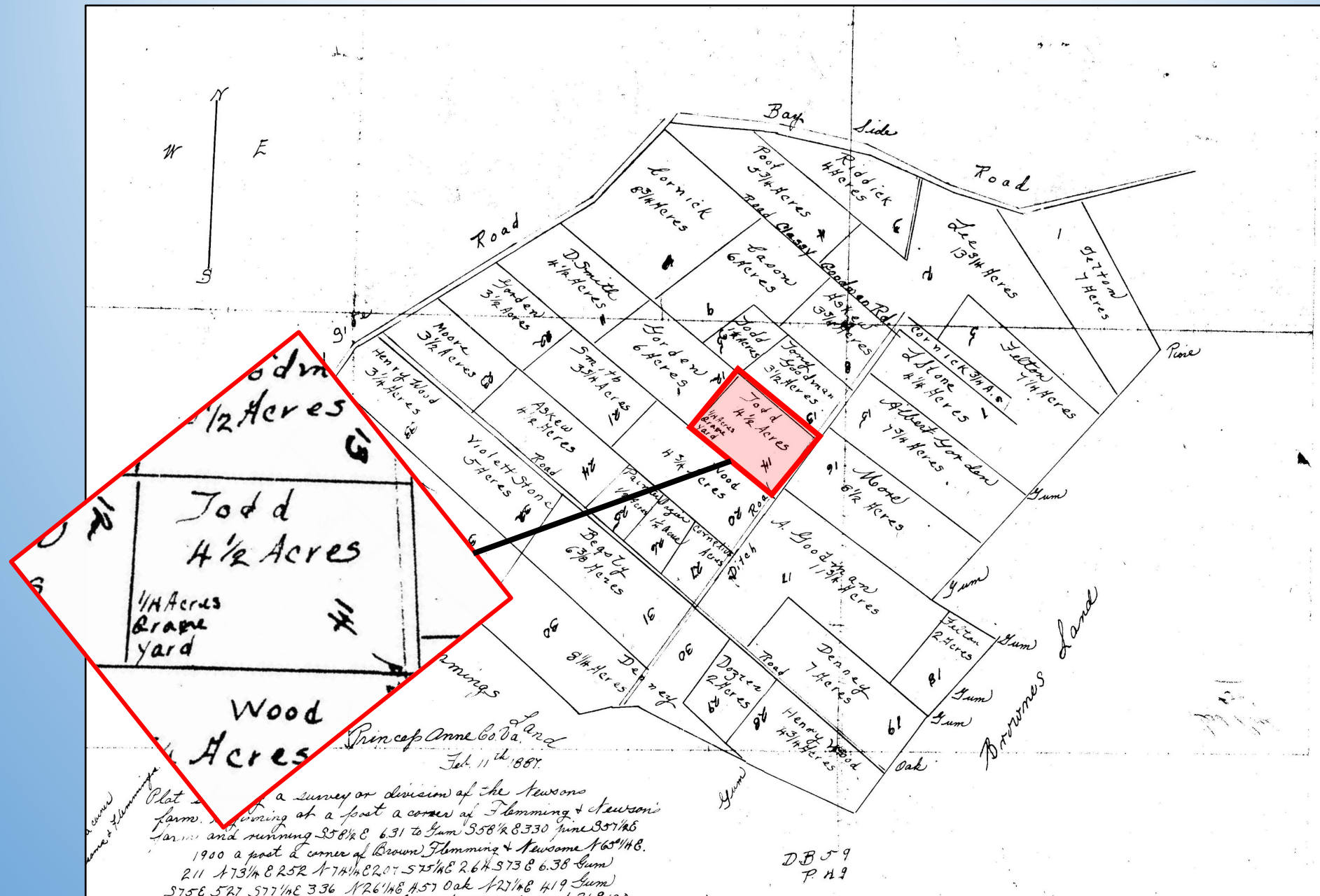
Coffee Ct

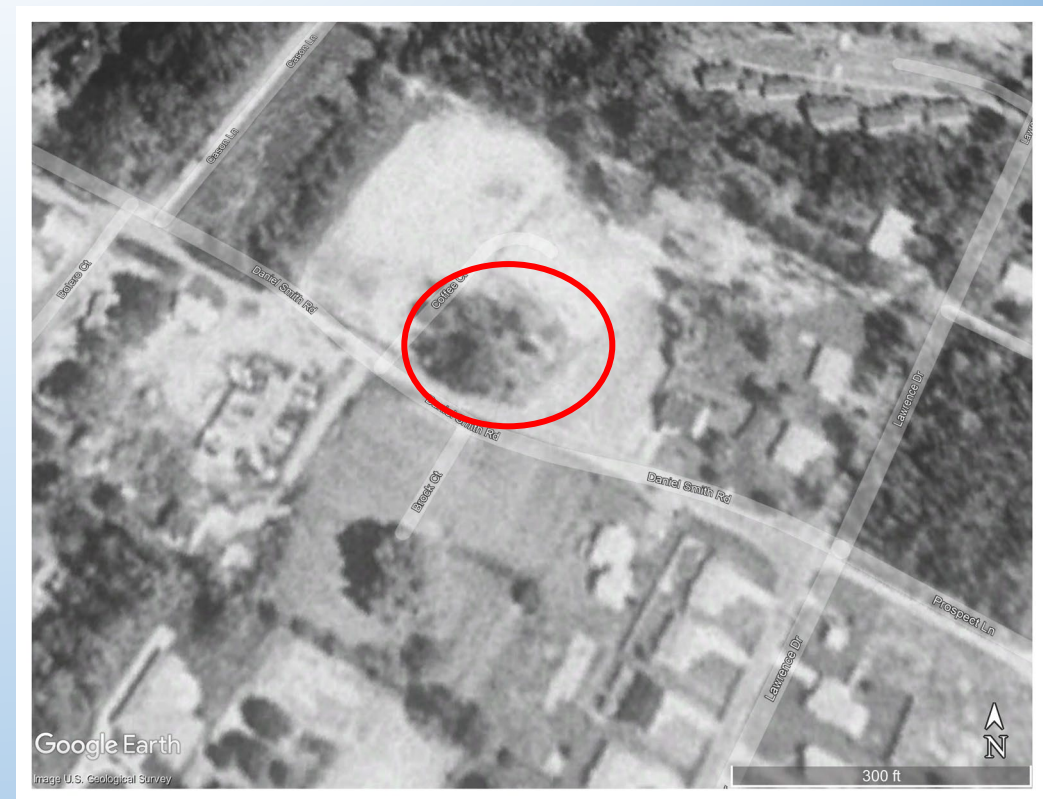
cvt-de-sac



Daniel Smith Rd.

Recorded 07/27/21





Newsome Farm Cemetery

Recommended Eligible under

Criterion A (broad patterns of history)

- Community Planning and Development
- Ethnic Heritage: Black
- Social History

Criterion D (likely to yield information)

- Potential to provide information on a particular cultural group

Criteria Consideration D (cemeteries)

A cemetery is eligible if it derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events.



Appendix 2

Virginia Beach Historic Preservation Commission

Title: Policy for Remote Participation by Members in Commission Meetings
Date of Adoption:

1.0 Purpose and Need

The purpose of this policy is to enable members of the Historic Preservation Commission (hereinafter the "Commission") to participate in Commission meetings remotely, by electronic communication means, in accordance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.

2.0 Policy

It is the policy of the Commission that individual members of the Commission may participate in Commission meetings by electronic means as permitted by Virginia Code § 2.2-3708.2 or its successor provision. This policy shall apply to the entire membership and without regard to the identity of the member requesting remote participation or the matters that will be considered or voted on at the meeting. This policy applies to the Commission and to any subcommittee appointed by the Commission that has voted to adopt this policy.

3.0 The Request and Eligibility Criteria

Whenever an individual member wishes to participate from a remote location, the member shall notify the Chair and the appropriate City staff member on or preferably before the day of the meeting that (1) the member is unable to attend the meeting due to a temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition that prevents the member's physical attendance or due to a family member's medical condition that requires the member to provide care for such family member, thereby preventing the member's physical attendance ("medical reason"); or (2) the member is unable to attend due to a personal matter and the member identifies with specificity the nature of the personal matter ("personal reason"). Participation for a personal reason is limited to two meetings per calendar year or 25% of the meetings held per calendar year, rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greater.

4.0 Quorum and Minutes Requirement

A quorum of the Commission must be physically assembled at the primary meeting location to enable remote participation by a member, and arrangements must be made for the voice of the remote participant to be heard by all persons at the primary meeting location.

The reason that the member is unable to attend the meeting and the remote location from which the member participates shall be recorded in the meeting minutes. If the reason for the remote participation is for a medical reason, the minutes shall include a statement that a temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition prevented the member's physical attendance at the primary meeting location or that a family member's medical condition required the member to provide care for such family member, thereby preventing the member's physical attendance. The minutes do not need to include the specific disability or medical condition, or, if applicable, the identity of the family member. If instead the member is unable to attend due to a personal reason, the minutes must include the specific nature of the personal matter.

5.0 Challenges

If a member's proposed participation from a remote location is challenged by another member as being inconsistent with this policy, then the Commission shall vote on whether to allow such participation. If the Commission votes to disapprove the member's remote participation because such participation would violate this policy, such disapproval shall be recorded in the minutes with specificity.