

ACCEPTED FEBRUARY 25, 2015

AFRICAN BURYING GROUND COMMITTEE  
MEETING SUMMARY

**JANUARY 9, 2015    MACLEOD BOARD ROOM PORTSMOUTH PUBLIC LIBRARY    2:00 P.M.**

Present:            Vernis Jackson, Chair; Councilor Dwyer, Kelvin Edwards; Valerie Cunningham

Also Present: Kathleen Wheeler; Ellen Marlatt; Morey Goodman; JerriAnne Boggis; Towny Manfull; David Allen, Deputy City Manager; David Moore, Community Development Director

Absent:            Mary Bailey (e)

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Chair Jackson opened the meeting and noting the absence of a quorum at the start of the meeting the Chair moved straight to the discussion of Ceremony preparations intending to act on minutes at the end of the meeting [the minutes will be moved to the next meeting].

Chair Jackson described the purpose of the meeting to begin planning for the reburial and project completion at the African Burying Ground. She noted the presence of various Community members and each person introduced themselves. Chair Jackson thanked everyone for their attendance and then invited members of the Committee and those present to share their ideas about what might be included in the proceedings related to the project completion. Each person in attendance had an opportunity to share their thoughts and a discussion ensued about the many possibilities.

The Committee revisited the discussion about the date for the celebration and Ms. Cunningham again raised the possibility of coordinating the African Burying Ground events with the Juneteenth celebrations, however the Committee reconfirmed the appropriateness of the earlier date in May.

In the end, an outline of events emerged with those in attendance agreeing on the tone and intent of the major public events. These events included planning for the arrival of the artwork and its installation; preparing the remains for reinterment; ensuring meaning processions when the remains are transported; a watch night prior to the reburial; reburial ceremony onsite; and public celebration following the ceremony. Venues were also discussed including New Hope Baptist Church (watch night) and the Portsmouth Middle School for the public celebration. General times were discussed and the tone of the events with the watch service having solemn and prayerful tones, the reburial ceremony honoring those to be buried and those buried at the site, and the public celebration being vibrant and energetic and reflective of the community's experience of the past 11 years.

It was agreed that Mr. Moore would attempt to summarize the comments into a list of events with some other details in preparation for the next meeting.