



CEMETERY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes
October 3, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.
Conference Room A
Portsmouth City Hall
1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth, NH

Members Present: Co-Chair Susan Sterry (Sterry), Co-Chair Dee Dee Forte (Forte), Eva Boice (Boice), Peter Splaine (Splaine), Sue Polidura (Polidura), Michael Griffin (Griffin), Celeste Brooks (Brooks), and Steve Buzzell (Buzzell)

Members Present via Zoom: None

Members Staff Present: Corin Hallowell (Hallowell) Parks and Greenery Foreman, City of Portsmouth

Members Absent: Duncan MacCallum

1. Meeting called to order at 4:00 p.m. and roll call of the members as noted above.
2. Minutes: Boice provided a clarification regarding the New Hampshire Charitable Trust Foundation and that they will need the City's EIN for the Cemetery Committee's grant information. **Motion: Boice moved to approve the minutes of September 5, 2024 meeting. Seconded by Polidura. Motion is approved.**
3. New Projects: City received \$2,500.00 from Steve Ballon who will be developing one of the new buildings on the railroad tracks, to remove the chain link fence that is parallel to North Cemetery and his property in order to beautify this area. This will be done by the DPW after some fall projects have been completed. Hallowell stated that the DPW will also clean up the area and prune the trees.
4. Fundraising – Flatbread: Brooks provided an update on the fundraising opportunity at Flatbread. They require that the organization have an email database in order to self-promote the event. Discussion ensued if the event information could be posted on the City newsletter, the City Facebook page or other social media outlets, such as the Unofficial Portsmouth Facebook page. Hallowell stated that he will handle getting the banner printed once the size and content are provided. This event will be scheduled at a to be determined date in 2025.

5. Report of Yellow Fever Project: The UNH archaeology students were digging at North Cemetery again in order to uncover evidence of a mass grave. It was not fruitful; however, a buried headstone was recovered about 2 – 3 feet down in the ground and there was evidence of a coffin beneath. The headstone was dug up and once the pit was filled back in, the headstone was placed into the ground to mark the location. Another independent archaeologist, who has her own ground penetrating equipment, surveyed the entire cemetery and did not discover further evidence of a mass grave. However, she did find evidence at the edge of the cemetery near the water line of some indications that there are some remains in that area. The UNH team would like to come back in the spring and bring a small backhoe with them in order to dig due to the density of the clay in the area. They will send a final report of both testings to the City once compiled. Also, the UNH archeology students are going to take the information compiled by Louise Tulman in her two books which included an alphabetical listing of all the people who were buried in North Cemetery, with dates that they died and indicating the block where they were buried and a map showing the blocks in the cemetery and who was buried there. They will then create a graph of who was buried in the 1700s and the 1800s and hopefully find information to determine where the mass yellow fever grave is. Polidura stated that she found a headstone bordering the Civil War cemetery with a date during the Yellow Fever, possibly indicating a clue to finding more yellow fever burials.
6. Report on Catherine Moffatt Whipple dedication: The plaque and dedication event took place at Catherine Moffatt Whipple who is buried in the Langdon tomb. Four other people were in attendance representing other signors of the Declaration of Independence.
7. Union Cemetery Headstone Cleaning: This event is scheduled for October 9, 2024 and the focus will be on the larger headstones as the water truck and pressure washer will be available. A brief discussion ensued about how to enlist more volunteers to clean the headstones. A list of projects at each cemetery was compiled.
8. Establish Rules for our Cemeteries: Discussion ensued about creating written guidelines for such items as requests from families or organizations who would like to install a plaque or a headstone what the process would be. Other cities will be contacted to ask what their processes would be, along with any restrictions, such as flags, flowers, wreaths, An example for requests could be: All requests for headstones, markers and plaques should be directed to the Portsmouth Cemetery Committee for guidance to obtain approval. Forte offered to conduct research on this topic.

9. Other Business:

- a. The SAR event is taking place at North Cemetery on November 16, 2024 when they will be marking the graves of the men who raided Fort William and Mary.
- b. Picking up broken headstone pieces was discussed as another project to be taken on by the Committee. These would be gathered, with the location noted and saved until the headstone could be repaired.
- c. Boice provided an update on the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation and that the Committee is now considered a sub-organization of the City of Portsmouth for grant purposes.

10. Public Comment: None

11. Adjournment: **Motion: Brooks moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Splaine. Motion is approved. Meeting adjourned at 5:05 PM.**

Next meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 7, 2024 at 4:00 p.m. in Conference Room A.

Minutes prepared by:
Barbara Zulkiewicz

Minutes Approved: November 7, 2024