



CEMETERY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes
September 5, 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), 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, Michael Griffin

1. Meeting called to order at 4:00 p.m. and roll call of the members as noted above.
2. Minutes: **Motion: Brooks moved to approve the minutes of June 6, 2024 meeting. Seconded by Polidura. All in favor.**
3. Update On Approved Projects Since the June Meeting: Sterry showed a slideshow of Cemetery Committee updates that occurred during the summer.
 - a. The engraving at Cotton Cemetery was completed and Andy Croteau finished the doors, which he did not charge for and was his contribution to the project.
 - b. Sterry was going to ask the City to extend some curbing and add some grassy areas from Sagamore Avenue onto South Street in front of the Cotton Cemetery.
 - c. Forte asked if a crosswalk could be put in at the top of Richards Avenue on South Street to give people a safe place to cross the street as there aren't any crosswalks that are close to that entrance on South Street. Sterry will add this on the list to ask the City.

- d. A tomb door at the Pleasant Street Cemetery (John Wendall) needs to be cleaned and painted. It was decided that a quote would be obtained from Andy Croteau or could possibly be done by volunteers.
 - e. Sterry advised that the marker for Dinah Chase Whipple was in place and Forte advised that the headstone should be ready in a few weeks. Hallowell advised that once it is delivered, he would put it in a safe place at the DPW until the ceremony, which might not occur until the Spring at this point.
 - f. The seawall was built at North Cemetery using the Moose plate grant money we received from the State of NH. Some Virginia rose plants were planted, more work will be done to remove invasive species and underbrush and saplings. The removal of these planting greatly improved the view.
 - g. Hallowell stated that there are some new plantings at the Union Cemetery and that there will be some additional trees planted in the spring to meet the wetland requirement for stabilization, along with some flowering dogwoods.
 - h. Buzzell made a tripod to use while straightening headstones and use this to straighten some headstones at Cotton Cemetery and he reported that it worked very well.
 - i. Sterry remarked that all the cemeteries look great this summer.
4. **Schedule Fall Cleanups in the Cemeteries:** Boice mentioned that she learned that inmates from Rockingham County jail may be a resource to help clean the headstones and do other projects in the cemeteries. Hallowell mentioned that the water department had some inmates help with the cleaning of some curbing and he would pass along the information of the person who organized this to the Committee. Also, Hallowell mentioned that Timberland and Liberty Mutual have volunteer programs. Discussion ensued as to the projects that could be accomplished, i.e.; painting the rails at Union Cemetery, headstone straightening, and grounds clearing were mentioned. Forte advised that Liberty Mutual only has a Portsmouth presence now, and that they usually conduct volunteer events in May of each year. Sterry asked Forte is she would contact Liberty Mutual to obtain more information.
5. **Fund Raising Update:**
- a. Boice stated that she is going to meet Abby Mills in the Finance Department at the City regarding assistance applying for grants through the NH Charitable Foundation. Boice suggested applying grants with an environmental focus or other types of grants vs. historical. She also advised that many companies

have their own foundations, grants and community outreach, but they may request setting up an account on their website, request EINs, and other such information. Sterry advised that she will speak with Deputy City Manager Woodland for guidance. Boice asked for Committee Member assistance once we receive further information and guidance.

- b. Brooks advised that she contacted Flatbread regarding their Community Nights when they donate a percentage of the proceeds of a Community Night (on a specific Tuesday) to a specific organization. They advised that 2025 fundraising applications should be submitted soon in order to get on the list for 2025. She learned that \$200 - \$700 is the average total donation amount. There would be some requirements, such as a banner, social media posts, along with a few other items. **Boice moved that Brooks pursue an application for a Cemetery Committee night at Flatbread. Brooks seconded. All in favor.** Brooks will contact Flatbread to apply and to obtain all the other requirements and any other advice would be obtained from Deputy City Manager Woodland.

6. **Old Business:**

- a. The plaque at North Cemetery has been installed on the rock. The general consensus was that it looked great.
- b. Yellow Fever: UNH would like to dig some more pits and will suggest some dates in September. Sterry will advise the Committee in case someone is interested in volunteering or just to observe.
- c. Cemetery Database: Kevin Russell sent the final copy to the Library for review and may be ready for release in a few weeks.
- d. Hall Cemetery: The headstones have been marked so that when the weeds get cut, it will be obvious to the crew that there are headstones there. Also to determine what the various groundcovers are in the area in order to identify and allow a low maintenance groundcover to thrive. Lastly, to clean the headstones again and to straighten the headstones.

7. **Other Business:**

- a. Sterry advised that she, Hallowell and Forte are members of the African Burying Ground Memorial Park Committee and requested that someone from that Committee also be a member of the Cemetery Committee.

- b. Sterry has had discussions with Robert P. Sullivan, Of Counsel regarding ensuring that there is enough space for cemeteries going forward.
- c. Sterry advised that in June, 2024, the City received a call from a woman from Virginia who once resided in Portsmouth and that she wished to return a headstone that she had in her possession to Portsmouth, which she did. It is now in safekeeping with Hallowell at the DPW until further arrangements can be made.

8. **Public Comment:** None

9. **Adjournment: Motion: Splaine moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Polidura. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 5:00PM.**

Next meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 3, 2024 at 4:00 p.m. in Conference Room A.

Draft Minutes prepared by:
Barbara Zulkiewicz

Minutes Approved: October 3, 2024