



CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE
AFRICAN BURYING GROUND MEMORIAL PARK COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, September 9, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.
Conference Room A
City Hall Complex, 1 Junkins Avenue
Portsmouth, NH 03801

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call:** The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

Members present: Assistant Mayor / Chairperson JoAnna Kelley (Chair / AM), Suzanne Woodland, Deputy City Manager and Regulatory Counsel (DCM), Dee Dee Forte (Forte), Co-Chair, Portsmouth Cemetery Committee, Susan Sterry (Sterry), Co-Chair, Portsmouth Cemetery Committee, Dariya Steele (Steele), Black Heritage Trail New Hampshire, and Gina Bowker (Bowler), Black Heritage Trail New Hampshire. Chris Dwyer arrived shortly after the Call to Order. Also at 4:30 p.m., Jill Minot-Seabrook (Minot-Seabrook), Seacoast African American Culture Center (SAAC), and Joyce Patterson (Patterson), Seacoast African American Culture Center (SAAC) arrived at the meeting.
2. **Approval of minutes:** It was determined that there was not a quorum present at the meeting. The approval of the minutes of the August 5, 2024 meeting will be held until the next meeting, along with any other matters that require a vote.
3. **Repair / replacement of vault cover:** The Chair/AM opened up the discussion with speaking about the site visit to the Memorial Park, which many of the Committee members visited. Sterry stated she went to Home Depot and brought some outdoor tile samples and several size tiles in order to gauge the size. She also spoke to a tile specialist who suggested that there were a number of reasons why the tiles could be popping out, i.e., wrong type of tile (e.g.; not outdoor tiles), too much mortar on the base, and insufficient grouting. Sterry recommended that we use a local tile specialist in order to have someone local to contact if there were any issues and to get a quote to re-tile the Sankofa, along with comparing the existing material with a better option to withstand the winter. DCM will discuss further options with Corin Hallowell (Hallowell) and Jerome Meadows (Meadows) in order to address the tile issue, with the intention of keeping with mosaic design and original color, to the extent possible. There was consensus to retain Meadows' original artistic vision. DCM will report back to the Committee after speaking with Meadows and looking at the original contract documents.

Patterson provided information regarding colors that should be used for the repairs at the Sankofa that would be appropriate per African culture. She distributed information on the colors used and the meaning of the colors. She stated she was uncomfortable with the color which was shown at the last meeting.
4. **Collaboration with Cemetery Committee on known and unknown slave cemeteries:** As previously discussed at the August 5, 2024 meeting, there was

interest in creating a collaborative relationship between this Committee and the Cemetery Committee due to the similarities and purpose of the missions of these Committees. This would require a vote of the Committee to change the mission statement. Sterry and Forte, also members of the Cemetery Committee, spoke to their knowledge of the slave cemetery on Lafayette Road at the Episcopal Church and another on private property on Ocean Road. The property owner on Ocean Road stated that they would be amicable to allow public access. DCM spoke to next steps in order to protect the cemetery, provide public access and clearly denote a buffer zones for construction projects. DCM will also look to see what may already been put into the plans and will report to the Committee at the next meeting.

In regard to the two Committees working together, the Dinah Chase Whipple memorial ceremony which will hopefully be taking place in spring, and this would offer an opportunity for the Committees and other organizations to work together to tell Dinah's story and recognize her contributions to the community. It would lead to an opportunity to bring a heightened awareness for our historical figures of color in our cemeteries and pay them homage.

5. **Other Business:** Chair/AM asked DCM to obtain the balance of the trust fund and also to speak with Councilor Cook to determine what is deemed public art and where in this project, some of the public art funds could be used. DCM suggested reinvigorating the conversation with UNH to curate the small number of teeth and other items that were not reinterred in case at some point they would want to conduct some testing. This will be discussed at the next meeting for more discussion or vote.
6. **Public Comment:** John Robinson, 44 Lincoln Avenue, Portsmouth, NH, who has a background in archeology and asked if there was an archaeological survey done at the Lafayette Road site. DCM stated that to her knowledge there has not been that type of survey conducted at that location. Mr. Robinson suggested that a survey be done before the bulldozers arrive and to expand the area depending on the sampling. A short discussion ensued regarding Prince Whipple and Dinah Chase Whipple, the Black Heritage Trail and Ona Judge. Dwyer asked about a possible mural on the side of the Black Heritage Trail building. Steele stated that the details of this project are still in progress.
7. **Adjournment: Motion by Minot-Seabrook to adjourn, seconded by Bowler. All in favor. So moved.** Meeting adjourned at 4:53 p.m.

The next meeting of the African Burying Ground Memorial Park Committee will be held in Conference Room A at Portsmouth City Hall on Monday, October 7, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes prepared by:
Barbara Zulkiewicz

Minutes approved: October 21, 2024