



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

Monday, October 21, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.
Law Library, 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: JoAnna Kelley (Chair), Assistant Mayor/Chairperson, Susan Sterry (Sterry), Co-Chair - Portsmouth Cemetery Committee, Dierdre Forte (Forte), Co-Chair - Portsmouth Cemetery Committee, Gina Bowker (Bowker), Black Heritage Trail New Hampshire, Ron Baisden (Baisden), member application pending, Jill Minot-Seabrook (Minot-Seabrook), Seacoast African American Cultural Center

Guest: Chris Dwyer (Dwyer), Chair of Portsmouth Public Art Committee (PARC)

Present via Zoom: Tanisha Johnson, Black Lives Matter New Hampshire

Staff present: Suzanne Woodland, Deputy City Manager and Regulatory Counsel (DCM).
Corin Hallowell (Hallowell), Parks and Greeneries Foreman

2. **Review and Approval of draft minutes - August 5, 2024 and September 9, 2024 meetings:** It was determined that there was not a quorum at this point of the meeting. The approval of the minutes was held until later in the meeting when the quorum could possibly be met.

At 4:10 p.m., having now met quorum - Bowker moved to accept the minutes of the August 5, 2024 and September 9, 2024 meetings. Minot-Seabrook seconded. All in favor. So moved.

3. **Update on options for repair of the Sankofa on the vault cover:** Hallowell stated that they are still working on the tile options. Sterry contacted a tile company and they are having a hard time finding glass tiles that are similar in size and in the desired orange color. Hallowell suggested that they contact Jerome Meadows (Meadows) and have him resume his search to find new tiles in the correct color and vault cover will withstand the winter. Hallowell stated he will contact Meadows for an update for a proposal for repairing the facing that is coming off the standing figures. DCM stated that there is \$37,822.45 in the Trust Fund and if it was necessary to further engage Meadows or pay for some samples, there would be funds available to do so. Hallowell also stated that the chip seal on the pavement leading into the area from State Street into the TD Bank ATM area needs to be repaired as well. Baisden suggested that TD Bank be approached for a possible contribution to perform this work. The Committee agreed this would be a good idea.

4. **Update on the Trust Funds and discussion regarding maintenance of art elements:**
Chair opened the discussion regarding a possible collaboration with PARC which may be beneficial to the African Burying Ground. Dwyer provided information on the background and mission of the PARC, stating the expertise of the members in art, outdoor public art, maintenance planning and fundraising, along with being governed by a City ordinance. This would allow the African Burying Ground Committee to focus on the historical significance of the various African Burying Ground sites in the City and perhaps broaden the scope of the mission of the Committee to include awareness of both free and enslaved African Americans as well as indigenous people. A detailed and informative conversation ensued. This collaboration will need further discussion by each Committee.
5. **Review of stipulations relative to burial site at 1035 Lafayette Road:** A study was conducted on the approved development site including ground penetrating radar, to determine the scope of the burying ground site approval stipulations are in place to require PHA to protect the burial sites. Planning Department reps will be visiting the site throughout the building to ensure that the stipulations are being followed. Easements will be put in place to allow the public to visit the site, along with some designated parking spaces for the public.
6. **History of the burying ground and potential next steps relative to research:** DCM included information in the packet regarding Kathy Wheeler's archaeological summary from 2001 to present and suggested that the Committee dedicate a full meeting to reviewing past minutes and other information. Kathy Wheeler offered to be involved in further conversations. DCM stated that the Committee should look at all the work that was done and options for the burying of the few remains which were found at the Burying Ground. It was agreed that this meeting would require substantial time.
7. **Review and approval of the draft minutes of the April 14, 2021 African Burying Ground Stewardship Committee (providing valuable research information):**
Bowker moved to accept the minutes of the April 14, 2021 African Burying Ground Stewardship Committee. Sterry seconded. All in favor. So moved.
8. **Mission of the Committee:** Revisions to the current mission of the Committee was further discussed. Chair provided her input and asked if indigenous people should be included in the mission statement. Sterry believes there are indigenous people burial sites in the area, but not on public land. Discussion ensued to investigate other sources of information locally, such as at Strawberry Banke and other State archaeological groups. The Committee was asked to provide any edits or comments regarding the draft mission statement.
9. **Other Business:** None
10. **Public Comment:** None
11. **Adjournment:** *Motion by Bowker to adjourn, seconded by Sterry. All in favor. So moved.* Meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

The next meeting of the African Burying Ground Memorial Park Committee will be held in the Law Library on the 4th floor at Portsmouth City Hall on Monday, November 18, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes prepared by:
Barbara Zulkiewicz

Minutes approved: November 18, 2024