



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

Monday, April 21, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.
City Hall Complex - Conference Room A
1 Junkins Avenue
Portsmouth, NH 03801

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call:** The meeting was called to order at 4:03 p.m.

Members present: Assistant Mayor JoAnna Kelley (Chair); Dierdre Forte (Forte), Co-Chair - Portsmouth Cemetery Committee; Jill Minot-Seabrook (Seabrook), Seacoast African American Cultural Center; Dariya Steele (Steele), Black Heritage Trail New Hampshire; Dzifa (Joyce) Patterson (Patterson), Seacoast African American Cultural Center; Jason Green (Green), Black Lives Matter New Hampshire; Ron Baisden (Baisden); Rev. Robert Thompson (Thompson), Seacoast NAACP

Members present via Zoom: Gina Bowker (Bowker), Black Heritage Trail NH

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

Guests: Dr. Kathleen Wheeler, Head Archeologist at African Burying Ground Memorial Park; Chris Dwyer, Portsmouth Public Art Committee
2. **Review and approval of draft minutes of the March 3, 2025 meeting:** Ron Baisden moved to accept the minutes of the March 3, 2025 meeting. Dee Forte seconded the motion. All in favor. The motion was approved.
3. **Mission Statement / Committee Name:** The Committee came to a consensus as to the mission statement at the last meeting and as there was no further discussion regarding changing the name of the Committee, this item was tabled at this time.
4. **Scheduling Community Engagement Meeting:** DCM stated she was in contact with Megan Howey and Amy Michaels at UNH and due to time constraints, they will contact the Committee once they have some dates and options.
5. **Presentation by Kathleen Wheeler regarding Reburial of Ancestors in 2014:** Wheeler gave a presentation on the history of the burying ground, the care and dedication of the reburial of the remains and the ancestors that were found. Dr. Wheeler would like to reignite telling this story to remind people of what happened on Chestnut Street.
6. **Curation:** DCM stated that she, the Chair and Wheeler spoke about accepting Wheeler's offer to continue to maintain the remains for a period of time and to formally document the offer. DCM offered to draft an agreement to preserve the status quo and present it to the Committee.

7. **Dinah Chase Whipple monument installation – June 13, 2025 at 1:00 p.m.:**

The event will take place at North Cemetery and the Committee, along with the family, are working on a list of speakers to speak at the event. The information will be distributed to local organizations, included in the City newsletter and via social media.

8. **Other scheduled events:**

- a. Dariya Stelle of the Black Heritage Trail gave information leading up to Juneteenth and the tenth anniversary of the African Burying Ground Memorial Park.
- b. Dzifa Patterson of SAACC informed the Committee of the march across the bridge and SAACC that will be celebrating its 25th anniversary.

9. **Other Business:** Hallowell informed the Committee that he has the tiles for the Sankofa and the tile person will be installing the new tiles on May 12, 2025. The week of May 26, 2025, the following work will be done by Daedalus: rewaxing of the bronze structures, refinishing of the metal sculptures, recoating the pedestal and paint in the letters in the ribbon and on the Court Street side. The waterline project should be completed within the next few weeks.

10. **Public Comment:** Dwyer advised that the faded and cracked tiles in the fence should be replaced and that she has the pattern and the tiles. Hallowell with speak with Daedalus.

11. **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 4:37 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, May 19, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.

This meeting was later cancelled on May 19, 2025 and rescheduled to June 23, 2025.

Meeting Minutes prepared by:
Barbara Zulkiewicz

Minutes approved: November 17, 2025