



CEMETERY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes
January 9, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.
Conference Room A
Portsmouth City Hall
1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth, NH

Members Present: Chair Susan Sterry (Sterry); Co-Chair Dee Forte (Forte); Peter Splaine (Splaine); Sue Polidura (Polidura); Michael Griffin (Griffin); Steve Buzzell (Buzzell); Duncan MacCallum (MacCallum)

Members Present via Zoom: Eva Boice (Boice)

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

Members Absent: Celeste Brooks (Brooks)

Public Attendees: Shane Forsley (Forsey), Hampshire Development Corp. on behalf of 361 Hanover Street and John Chagnon (Chagnon), Haley Ward on behalf of Hampshire Development Corp.

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call:** Meeting called to order at 4:00 p.m. and roll call of the members was taken and as noted above. A brief discussion ensued regarding interest in voting a new chair or co-chair. Buzzell moved to continue with the current officers: Chair (Sterry) and Co-Chair (Forte). Polidura seconded the motion. All in favor. The motion was approved.
2. **Minutes:** Polidura moved to approve the minutes of November 7, 2024 meeting. Seconded by Buzzell. All in favor. The motion was approved.
3. **Liberty Mutual Service Day:** Forte completed the draft application for the service day with Liberty Mutual and provided a copy to Deputy City Manager Suzanne Woodland, Sterry and Hallowell for review. The application needs to be submitted by the end of February. It has been suggested that painting the wrought iron railings at North Cemetery and Union Cemetery would be a good project. The City will need to provide the materials. Sterry made a motion to submit the application (after review) to Liberty Mutual to participate in and accept the Liberty Mutual Service Day on Friday, May 9, 2025 from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and request 12 people. Splaine seconded the motion. All in favor. The motion was approved.

4. **Plans for Cemetery Repairs:** Hallowell stated that Sterry would like to have two (2) more tripods made and on hand for when we have people to work on straightening headstones. Spaine shared his research into glues used for stone repair. Hallowell stated that he would buy some and could try repairing a stone. Griffin, Splaine, Buzzell and Hallowell will be getting together to compile a list of tools and materials needed to repair and straighten headstones in order to put kits together for groups to use for this purpose.
5. **North Cemetery Work Update:** Hallowell provided an update on the work done at North Cemetery during the last month. The chain link fence along the dirt road towards the railroad track area was removed and the area was cleaned up. Plans to grade the area and to plant grass in the Spring. Portions of the fence which extended towards North Mill Pond and the drainage swell were left due to undetermined boundary lines. The tree crew will take down the two (2) dead ash trees, and debris and loose rocks were removed. Earl Chase, Horticulturist from Prescott Park and the DPW crew remove invasive species at the shoreline.
6. **361 Hanover Street Cemetery:** This item was moved to #3 in the agenda due to public in-person attendees at the meeting. Several variances have been requested for the former headquarters of the Heinemann Publishing Company and a resident in the neighborhood has voiced concerns that there is a burial ground on the property and cited State of New Hampshire RSAs that would need to be adhered to. Sterry conducted research into finding out if there was a cemetery at the corner of Rock and Hanover Streets due to this concern. According to information in "Rambles about Portsmouth", a Parker family headstone was located in this area that was once known as the Portsmouth Steam Company Burial Ground (this is not a confirmed cemetery in Portsmouth). A Parker family member posted this information on the "Find a Grave" website in 2010 and 2013. Sterry attempted to contact the family member who posted on the Find a Grave website but has not heard back from them. After extensive research, Sterry found that much of the land in the area in question was given to people through land grants and there are not any records or proof that there was ever a cemetery at this location, however Sterry cannot either confirm or deny that there ever a cemetery at this location. Forsey and Chagnon, who are involved in the development of the Heinemann property, requested confirmation of a burial site at this location from the City, along with specific State of New Hampshire RSAs and archeological contacts that would be beneficial to them as they progress in this project. Forsey stated that a note will be made on the plan regarding this subject. Forsey and Chagnon left the meeting after this topic was discussed.
7. **Yellow Fever Project Cemetery:** This project is on hold at this time.

8. **Other Business:**

- a. Sterry stated that she has provided Brooks with information for the application required by Flatbread for participation in their community fundraising day.
- b. Sterry stated that she is working with Robert Sullivan regarding the need for a new cemetery in Portsmouth. This may need to be presented to the City Council, and a new committee may need to be formed or it may fall to the auspices of this Committee.
- c. Deputy City Manager Woodland will be attending the next meeting to present the new Volunteer Handbook to the Committee.
- d. Sterry advised that she spoke with the Mayor and that North Cemetery should be part of Portsmouth's Nation's 250 Anniversary Celebration in July, 2026. She felt that it deserves acknowledgement due to the number of important Revolutionary War soldiers and others that are buried there. The Mayor stated that Senator Sheehan is heading up the celebration committee for the State and that he would be in contact with her. Polidura stated that, at a recent City Council meeting, she requested that the City form a Commission to plan Portsmouth's participation in this event.per RSA 17-S:1 (2024) – American Revolution Sestercentennial Commission.
- e. African Burying Ground Memorial Park Committee: The next meeting is on January 27, 2025. Sterry intends to keep the Committee appraised of how the two committees could work together.
- f. Griffin asked if Sterry had contacted mason in regard to repairing the Wendall tomb on Pleasant Street. She stated that she did and the mason stated that there was not a danger of the tomb collapsing, but would be interested in repairing it, along with re-stacking the old wall at Hall Cemetery. Sterry has asked for an estimate and will follow up on her request.
- g. Dinah Whipple memorial – Forte stated that Seacoast Memorials has closed and is now working with Richardson Monument in Portsmouth. Griffin offered another option. Forte will contact Laurel Yancy, descendant of Prince Whipple and provide her with an update. Some further fundraising may need to be done.

9. **Public Comment:** None

10. **Adjournment:** Polidura moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Splaine. All in favor. Motion was approved. Meeting adjourned at 5:02 p.m.

Next meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 6, 2025 at 4:00 p.m. in Conference Room A.

Draft Minutes prepared by:
Barbara Zulkiewicz

Minutes Approved: March 6, 2025