



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

Monday, March 3, 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 4:00 p.m.

Members present: Assistant Mayor JoAnna Kelley (Chair); Susan Sterry (Sterry), 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: Dierdre Forte (Forte), Co-Chair - Portsmouth Cemetery Committee; Gina Bowker (Bowker), Black Heritage Trail NH

Staff present: Suzanne M. Woodland, Deputy City Manager and Regulatory Counsel (DCM); Corin Hallowell (Hallowell), Parks and Greeneries Foreman, and Dave Desfosses (Desfosses), DPW Project Manager- Engineering & Operations
2. **Review and approval of draft minutes of the January 27, 2025 meeting:** Baisden moved to accept the minutes of the January 27, 2025 meeting. Steele seconded. All in favor. The motion was approved.
3. **Acknowledgement of passing of Vernis Jackson:** Chair acknowledged the passing of Vernis Jackson, former Chairwoman of the Committee and her accomplishments toward the establishment of the Memorial Park. A moment of silence was observed.
4. **Water Main Break Repair Update:** Defosses provided an update to the water main break and passed out a diagram of the proposed repairs. The work will be done in April and May. 96 and 97 Chestnut Street are the residences that have been impacted and will need to be serviced. Chair asks Defosses to keep the Committee updated as Juneteenth and the 10th Anniversary events will be taking place in the park.
5. **Update on Restoration of Art Elements:** Hallowell advised that he received a quote for the repairs to the art elements. He has also received a quote from the tile person for approximately \$6,500 to replace the Sankofa tiles. The tiles will be provided by Jerome Meadows.
6. **Dinah Chase Whipple Monument:** DCM reported that the order for the monument has been submitted and anticipates that the monument will be delivered in time for June 13, 2025 at 1:00 p.m. commemorative event. The stakeholders will discuss the

coordination of the event and speakers. The Chair publicly thanked the Colonial Dames for helping to fund the monument. Sterry advised that there were 5 public donations, along with a donation from Appledore Marine Engineering who run the Dinah Whipple Stem Program out of UNH.

7. **Lafayette Road Burial Site:** DCM provided an update that there is some pending litigation related to title issues and that there will be a delay in the development of the site.
8. **Mission Statement and Next Steps:** The Committee reviewed the revised draft mission statement that was discussed at the previous meeting. Also, a potential name change of the Committee was discussed. Three options were presented, and the Chair asked the Committee to review the names or submit any other names to the Chair or DCM prior to the next meeting. A potential vote will be taken at the next meeting. A change of Committee name will need to go before the City Council.
9. **Planning for Public Meeting to Discuss Research Options and Curation:** The Committee revisited prior discussions to hold a public community engagement meeting leading up to Juneteenth and the Memorial Park 10-year anniversary in order to re-engage and educate the community. The Chair and DCM will reserve a room at the Portsmouth Library for a two-hour block of time from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on a date to be determined. The speaker is still to be confirmed at this time. A draft outline of the event was distributed to the Committee for review and discussion. A detailed discussion ensued regarding the importance of research, science, technology, and education in the quest of identifying and telling the stories of African descendants who lived in Portsmouth.
10. **Other Business:** None
11. **Public Comment:** None
12. **Adjournment:** Motion by Baisden to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by the Chair. All in favor. The motion was approved. Meeting adjourned at 5:00 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, April 21, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes prepared by:
Barbara Zulkiewicz

Minutes approved: April 21, 2025