

**CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
COMMITTEE FOR CEMETERIES**



**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2026, 4 pm  
City Hall Conference Room A  
1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth NH**

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To participate via Zoom:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_T-ioaLbaSf6FQG8v8WKEXw](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_T-ioaLbaSf6FQG8v8WKEXw)

After registering, you will receive an email with login password.

**AGENDA**

1. Call to order and Roll call
2. Approval September 3, 2026 minutes
3. Point of Graves wall -- \$1,600 in donations accepted by City Council Sep 28
4. Revolutionary veterans gravesites rack card
5. Portsmouth Historical Society tours -- North Cemetery Thurs at 4, Sat at 2.  
Point of Graves, Thurs & Sat at 4pm
6. Rev war soldiers walking tour
7. Captain Joseph White grave on Spinney
8. Other business
9. Public comment
10. Adjourn

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**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2026, 4 pm**

**City Hall Conference Room A**

**1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth NH**

For the Zoom recording: <https://youtu.be/Co-r5yhF8No>

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**MINUTES**

**1. Call to order and Roll Call**

Dee Dee Forte, chair; Peter Splaine, Sue Polidura, Karyn DeNicola, Jennifer Merriam, Michael Griffin, Steve Buzzell, Tara Rix, Amy Dutton. Excused: Celeste Brooks, Bridget Brady. Staff: Corin Hallowell, Stephanie Seacord

**2. Minutes for August 6, 2026** – approved unanimously on a motion by Splaine seconded by Polidura.

**3. Point of Graves Wall Update** – Hallowell reported that DPW Project Manager Sproviero anticipated the completion of the surveying this week. Next step will be to put the project out to bid. In September the donation of funds will go to the City Council for approval. A project page for the Point of Graves, including a link to the design drawings is now added to the Point of Graves historic cemetery page: <https://www.portsmouthnh.gov/city/point-graves> Note: At the end of the meeting Buzzell suggested a Point of Graves headstone cleaning day for September 26, 9 am to 12 noon, to which Friends of the South End as well as sailors from the USS New Mexico will be invited.

**4. Rack card 2026 edition** – Seacord is anticipating comments from Brooks and will contact her in order to revise the draft.

**5. 250th Revolutionary War gravesite markers, tour, signage**

- Gravesites are marked. Seacord will work with Jamie McCarthy on a GPS map to enable a self-guided tour.
- Signage at the cemeteries has been designed but not yet produced.
- The Committee agreed that fall foliage visitors and Portsmouth Historical Society tours will continue to generate interest, so the tour and signage are still needed. After discussion the Committee agreed the markers should stay up, if in good condition, through the placement of wreaths in December – which will further highlight their locations.
- Seacord will report on website visit analytics at the October meeting.

**6. Broken Thomas Ayers Neal headstone in North Cemetery** – Forte and Polidura met with the descendant and discussed approaches for replacing the stone as the

broken-off piece was not among the fragments collected in the holding tomb.

**7. Headstone of Capt. Joseph White** (d. 1728), located on his former property that is now a private residence. Forte and Polidura met with the new (2023) owners. They are contemplating the installation of a swimming pool but are willing to see that the burial and headstone are properly preserved. They have agreed to a ground penetrating radar survey, which Polidura can arrange with the new City-serving archaeologist Jessica X who has availability in late September or October. Relocation might be to Harmony Grove where White's daughter and granddaughters are buried adjacent to the Spinney plots as the families are connected.

**8. Other Business –**

- Pleasant Street Cemetery – Wendell Tomb – Still seeking a mason to estimate the cost of the project. Dutton has a potential contact and will connect with Forte.
- Buzzell reported he also found in the crypt two GAR markers, one from the Lafayette Post #140 in Harlem NY and the other from Post 1 in Decatur IL. Topic on what to do with the markers was tabled until the October meeting.
- Buzzell also found a marker with Hebrew lettering which he took to Temple Israel. They will determine the location, potentially their cemetery on Banfield Road. Buzzell also 'reconnected' a fragment of marble with the Sheafes buried at St. John's. The Committee agreed it is rewarding to connect the pieces.
- Hollowell is able to provide Buzzell with a DPW tent so he can continue working as weather deteriorates.
- Dutton plans to meet Buzzell on Sep 11 at Cotton Cemetery for more headstone cleaning and Committee members are invited to join them.
- Polidura plans to offer a history walking tour of North Cemetery for the Committee. Will determine a weekday 4 pm date and advise.

**9. Public comment – None.**

**10. Adjourned** at 4:42 pm on a motion by Splaine seconded by Merriam.



**Portsmouth, New Hampshire**  
*Revolutionary War Veterans'*  
*Historic Gravesites*



In 2026, for the commemoration of America's 250th, the City of Portsmouth's Cemetery Committee marked the gravesites of all veterans of the American Revolution who are buried in the City's historic cemeteries. They created an interactive map marking the graves in North Cemetery, the South Street cemeteries, St. John's, Pleasant Street, and Point of Graves. Scan the QR code for that map or visit:  
***[portsnh.co/RevolutionaryWarVetsGravesites](https://portsnh.co/RevolutionaryWarVetsGravesites)***





North Cemetery, along Maplewood Avenue near North Mill Pond, is one of Portsmouth's oldest burying grounds (established in 1753). The cemetery is the final resting place of dozens of Revolutionary War veterans and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its significance to the history of Portsmouth and the American Revolution.

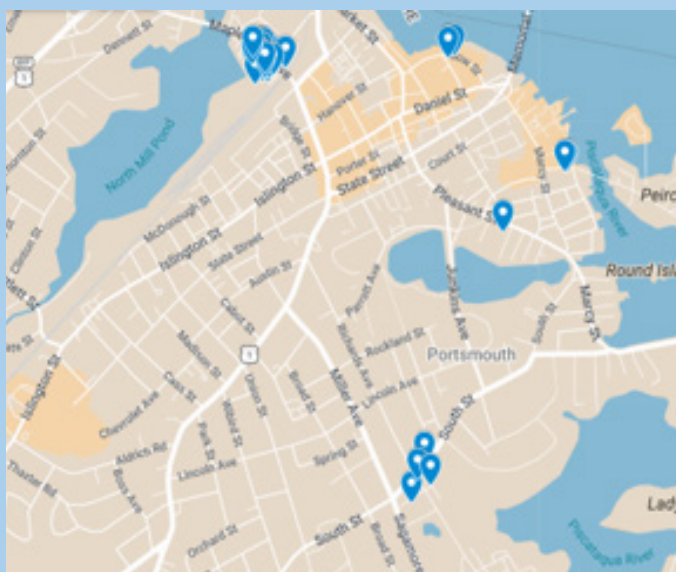
Among the key Revolutionary War veterans buried in North Cemetery are six Portsmouth men who participated in the raid on Fort William and Mary in December 1774, one of the first overt acts of the American Revolution.

For a directory of all the Revolutionary War veterans' gravesites across Portsmouth's historic cemeteries, visit:

**[portsnh.co/RevolutionaryWarGravesites](https://portsnh.co/RevolutionaryWarGravesites)**

Scan the QR code on the front of this card for the online version of the map below.

For more on the City's historic cemeteries, visit: **[portsnh.co/HistoricCemeteries](https://portsnh.co/HistoricCemeteries)**



**PortsmouthNH.gov**  
**1 Junkins Ave., Portsmouth NH 03801**

## LOCAL

# Portsmouth repairs at city's oldest cemetery boosted by \$240K donation

**Jeff McMenemy** Portsmouth Herald

Updated Sept. 25, 2026, 1:48 p.m. ET

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### Key Points

- A project to replace the wall around Portsmouth's oldest cemetery, Point of Graves, is moving forward.
  - The estimated cost of the project is \$480,000, funded by a mix of city money and private donations.
  - The current wall is a patchwork of materials from various eras and is in significant disrepair.
  - Construction on the new, more durable wall is expected to begin in the spring.
- 

PORTSMOUTH — A project to replace the wall around the city’s oldest cemetery is moving forward, thanks to a combination of city monies and private donations.

The estimated cost is \$480,000, according to city regulatory counsel [Suzanne Woodland](#).

She explained during a visit Sept. 23 to the historic [Point of Graves cemetery](#) off Mechanic Street in the city’s South End that Portsmouth has about \$240,000 in city money available for the project.

Another \$240,000 has been pledged to the project by a South End resident who wants to remain anonymous, Woodland said, along with another roughly \$10,000 in donations for the project from fundraising conducted by Friends of the South End (FOSE).

## **South End preservation**

“It is impressive,” Woodland said about the donations made by residents. “We’re really grateful for all the folks who have been able to contribute to make this a successful project for the South End.”

Christine Sproviero, a Department of Public Works project manager, told the City Council recently the historic cemetery was “deeded to the city in 1671.”

The cemetery was deeded to Portsmouth by Capt. John Pickering, according to the city’s website on the burial ground. It is located adjacent to the city-owned Prescott Park and a stone’s throw from the Piscataqua River.

“No gravestones survived previous to 1682 because Capt. Pickering’s cattle were allowed to continue grazing among the gravestones after the burying ground was established,” according to the city website.

## **Wall in state of 'significant disrepair'**

Portsmouth’s oldest cemetery “contains some of the finest examples of early gravestone artistry by many Massachusetts sculptors,” according to the city website and members of prominent early Portsmouth families were buried there.

Sproviero noted the existing perimeter wall at Point of Graves is 287 feet long.

“It’s in significant disrepair and requires replacement,” she said, and added it’s “obviously a very important historic feature.”

A conditions assessment was done on the wall in 2013, she explained, determining “the wall had actually been rebuilt numerous times since the cemetery was deeded, using a variety of materials and construction methods.

“What exists today is a patchwork of granite, field stone, brick, mortar repairs and spray applied concrete from different eras,” Sproviero said. “While those repairs

extended the life of the wall, comprehensive replacement is now the most appropriate long-term solution.”

The new wall “will have a dry stacked stone appearance with granite capstones,” she said.

“This will be durable, attractive and much easier to maintain,” she added.

## **Project timeline**

Sproviero said the unique, existing wrought-iron turnstile entrance to the burial ground will be restored off site and then returned.

She stated the goal is to put out a request for proposals for the project in October and potentially begin construction of the new wall in the spring.

“It’s going to be interesting when we go in here and dig it up, we don’t know how deep it is and what’s under there,” she said.

That’s why until that work begins, it’s unclear how long the project will take, Sproviero said.

She said an archeologist will help protect and preserve any historic artifacts found.

The City Council voted at its Sept. 16 meeting to accept the donation from the anonymous South End resident and the friends group.

## **Preserving history praised**

City Councilor Kate Cook noted “this is an extremely generous donation on the part of a resident of the South End.”

Mayor Deaglan McEachern said he appreciated “the financial contribution but equally as important is the view of preserving our history for future generations to come.”

He credited FOSE members with “making sure this is preserved.”

FOSE member Martin Hanssmann said he’s been “very fortunate to live in the South End of this wonderful city almost 25 years, and I really appreciate the importance the city of Portsmouth places on its history and the need to promote, preserve and educate others on its treasures.”

FOSE’s neighborhood association dates back “almost 50 years to the initial historic preservation efforts of this city,” he stated during the recent council meeting.

“A few months ago the FOSE board was approached by several FOSE members to help with a city initiative to rebuild the Point of Graves cemetery wall,” Hanssmann said.

That led to the large individual donation and a fundraising drive by the group that has already raised more than \$10,000, he said.

“This wall has sadly deteriorated over the last decades, maybe centuries, and has fallen into significant disrepair,” he told the council.

He pointed out “there is a lot of effort in the city to maintain its cemeteries but in this particular case, it needed a little extra help with the wall. A complex project of this scope is always most successful when there is a close partnership between the community and the city.”

