

**CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE
CEMETERY COMMITTEE**



**MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, MAY 7, 2026, 4 pm
City Hall Conference Room A
1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth NH 03801**

For the Zoom recording:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/UFRzsfMimeM?si=W3rnSMDWSeMuej4T>

1. Call to order and Roll Call: Chair Dee Dee Forte, Celeste Brooks, Bridget Buzzell, Steve Buzzell, Jennifer Merriam, Peter Splaine, Amy Dutton, Michael Griffin, Sue Polidura, Tara Rix. Staff: Corin Hallowell, Fiona Curran, Stephanie Seacord
2. Approve April 2nd meeting minutes – On a motion by Polidura, seconded by Buzzell, the committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes as amended.
3. Point of Graves Wall – Hallowell reported that DPW is awaiting cost estimates to accompany the design recommendation and expects to provide more information at the June 4 meeting. Anticipated construction work in 2027.
4. Serve with Liberty May 8 and May 15 – Forte and Hallowell have prepared the materials needed for the volunteers to paint the North and Union Cemetery fence on May 8, using high gloss Rustoleum rather than the POR paint which generates pervasive fumes and is very difficult to remove. For May 15 the plan is to have the volunteers clean headstones. Hallowell has secured three cases of D2 and will provide a water truck.
5. Woodbury Langdon plaque (agenda item taken out of order) – Forte reported that she and Hallowell will review the site and plaque placement on May 8 so that it can be installed the week of May 11, well in time to meet the June 10 deadline. No dedication event is scheduled yet.

Hallowell also introduced Fiona Curran, certified arborist and horticultural tech, who is a member of the Urban Forest team working on the landscape at City Hall, the Library and Prescott Park. She is shadowing Hallowell and his position as Arborist Foreman.

Rix asked who is responsible for controlling the invasive species (knotweed) encroaching on headstones and pathways in the South Street cemeteries, especially at the back corner of the ballfield. Hallowell said the City has a knotweed control program and is aware of the issue in that location.

6. Rack card 2026 edition – Brooks reported that she had expected to review her edits with the committee at this meeting. Seacord will incorporate in the next printing:
- North Cemetery historical marker image suggests that the information is only about North Cemetery – and is very difficult to read.
 - Headline and sub-head font size should be reversed.
 - Suggested the map should be higher resolution in order to read the street names.
 - Move the QR code to the front
 - In the list of historic cemeteries, the National Register and NH State Register notations should be differentiated from the cemetery names.
- Seacord will provide a revised draft at the June 4 meeting.

7. 250th Commemorative identification of Revolutionary War soldier gravesites
- Forte opened the discussion by suggesting the committee might do something to elevate awareness of the gravesites of local men who fought in the Revolutionary War. Polidura has researched a list of 30 names and gravesite locations. Seacord agreed that a page linked from the Cemetery Committee page on the City website would be simple to create and then provide the landing page for a QR code. Rix suggested a self-guided tour detailed on that page, which could be publicized with a dedicated rack card. The committee discussed the difficulty in finding the gravesites, even using “Find A Grave.” Dutton offered to visit each site to record the GPS coordinates. Each site could be flagged with a temporary fibreglas ‘snow stick’ (which would not impede mowing). Forte will ask Emma Stratton at Portsmouth Historical Society about the walking tour they did in North Cemetery last fall.

The committee also discussed the need to update the 40-year-old X map which, while extremely valuable, is not a good resource for identifying sites. Splaine offered to discuss mapping tools/programs with his brother who manages the historic Linwood Cemetery in Haverhill MA.

The committee is also interested in building awareness of the Medal of Honor recipient gravesites that Griffin has researched. Another linked web page can be created.

8. Other business
- WMUR interview – Rix determined that Rick Davidson and Bill Thompson, authors of Buried in New Hampshire, volumes I and II were the people she observed being interviewed in North Cemetery.
 - Hallowell was asked about the fence removed from the back of North Cemetery and explained the City is working on identifying the property line before proceeding with any kind of replacement. A line of trees rather than a fence is contemplated.

9. Public comment -- None

10. Adjourned at 4:50 pm. Next meeting: June 4, 2026