

CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE
COMMITTEE FOR CEMETERIES



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2025
1 JUNKINS AVENUE, PORTSMOUTH, NH 03801

For the Zoom recording:

<https://youtu.be/wIBrsmZPOUU>

MINUTES

1. Call to Order and Roll Call:
2. Attending: Dee Dee Forte, Celeste Brooks (via Zoom), Steve Buzzell, Michael Griffin, Peter Splaine, Sue Polidura, Brighid Brady. Absent: new member Tara Rix. Staff: Corin Hallowell, Stephanie Seacord (recording secretary). Absent: Suzanne Woodland.
3. Approval of the Minutes of the November 5, 2025 Cemetery Committee Meeting on a motion by Peter, seconded by Sue.
4. Review of potential 2026 projects
 - Wendell tomb repair (Pleasant Street Cemetery) – Dee is still planning to connect again with Chris Colby.
 - North Cemetery – Dee is awaiting feedback on potential ironwork repair by Peter Hapny.
 - Point of Graves wall – Dee is meeting with Friends of the South End members who may have funding (donation) resources. Corin reported discussing the project with NH DOT Archivist Mark Dubrowski who advised him that any excavation should have an archaeologist present and to take the appropriate steps if any remains are uncovered. The City is moving forward with the design process.
5. Cemeteries website
 - Steve asked about the Library database and Stephanie noted it has just been posted after extensive work under the direction of Cathryn Czajkowski in the Special Collections Department. Committee asked who has editing access and whether images and work updates can be added. Or Steve will expand the spreadsheet he has started. Committee discussed adding cemetery repair as a category in the city's Click 'n Fix system.
 - Stephanie and Dee met with Jamie McCarthy at DPW to discuss updating the GIS map of the City's historic cemeteries. He is also creating a City-owned historic cemeteries Google map to add to the website.
 - Stephanie will work with the committee to create 'blue' historical markers for those cemeteries without them i.e. Cotton and Hall.
 - Stephanie has set up a page for each of the 7 historic cemeteries and will

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move images from the Photo Gallery to the appropriate pages.

- “ToDo” list – Dee confirmed that the Committee is still interested in the list she, Sue Sterry and Eva Boice put together a couple of years ago.

6. Headstone straightening at Cotton - Steve shared images of work and a sample of the white marble stone that had been buried in the dirt that crumbles to dust. He showed images of the Ann Dougherty stone that was half-buried. The stone was repurposed from another burial. Michael commented that this happened frequently with stones being used as platforms under other markers, Steve and DPW will be working on creating forms this winter to provide an inventory of cement bases for stones that have fallen or been repaired. Michael commented on the noticeable improvements in Cotton and North thanks to the work. The Committee discussed creating/updating inventories of gravesites in each cemetery and that a UNH archaeology student might be interested as an internship project.
7. Daughters of the American Revolution plaque on the Woodbury Langdon tomb. The Committee reviewed the 9" x 6" bronze plaque and approved a motion by Sue seconded by Steve voted to allow the DAR to provide the Woodbury Langdon “Revolutionary War soldier” plaque for the City to affix to the tomb next spring/summer” Dee is working with the DAR’s Caroline Barrio (descendant) to plan a dedication ceremony after installation.
8. Rack card – Stephanie is working with Dee to update the rack card.
9. Liberty Mutual “Serve with Liberty” volunteers – On a motion by Peter seconded by Sue the Committee voted to approve Dee’s submission (by February) of a Cemeteries Committee project for two groups on May 8 and May 15, 2026 to put a second coat of paint on the Union fence, clean headstones or help straighten stones with guidance.
10. Green Burials – Corin reported that the City Manager will provide an update on this topic at the December 8, 2025 City Council meeting and clarify follow-up from staff, not the Cemetery Committee. The Committee reiterated their vote at their September 4, 2025 meeting that their purview is only the City’s historic cemeteries and not on active burial sites.
11. Committee terms - Dee is awaiting from June Philbrick the list of all Committee members and their terms.
12. Co-chair -- Dee requested assistance from the Committee in selecting a co-chair. She will be participating in the February, March and April 2026 meetings via Zoom and asked members to express any interest in being co-chair in advance of a vote at the February meeting.
13. Other Business

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- Michael reported that the Portsmouth Elks will hold a Wreaths Across America event on December 13, meeting at the Elks Lodge (Jones Avenue) at 10 am before dividing into teams to place wreaths on Revolutionary War veterans' and Medal of Honor winners' gravesites. He provides a short biography for each that is read by the person placing the wreath.
- Sue reported that the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution will commemorate the raid on Fort William and Mary at the fort on December 14 at 1 pm.
- There will be no Cemetery Committee meeting in January 2026.

14. Public Comment – none.

Adjournment – on a motion by Peter, seconded by Sue the committee voted to adjourn at 4:52 pm.