



## CEMETERY COMMITTEE

**Meeting Minutes**  
**June 6, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.**  
**Conference Room A**  
**Portsmouth City Hall**  
**1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth, NH**

Members Present: Co-Chair Susan Sterry (Sterry), Co-Chair Dee Dee Forte (Forte), Eva Boice (Boice), Peter Splaine (Splaine), Sue Poldura (Poldura) and Michael Griffin (Griffin), Celeste Brooks (Brooks), and Duncan MacCallum (MacCallum)

Members Present via Zoom: None

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

Members Absent: Steve Buzzell

1. Meeting called to order at 4:00 p.m. and roll call of the members as noted above.
2. Minutes: **Motion:** Boice moved to approve the minutes of May 2, 2024 meeting. Seconded by Forte. **All in favor.**
3. **Pruning at North Cemetery:** DPW performed some pruning at the big entrance. They removed a big shrub that was blocking the lilacs, shrubs that were hanging over the walk away and some other areas. Sterry said it was a great improvement.
4. **Hall Cemetery Update:** The lily of the valley was doing well, along with another type of plant, possibly day lilies which are getting tall and will eventually obscure the headstones. Sterry and Buzzell sprayed all the headstones, which made an improvement. They also marked the headstones that were knocked over. Sterry suggested that a ground cover would be good in order to alleviate maintenance in the cemetery. Hallowell and Susan will meet at the cemetery to discuss and identify the existing plants. Sterry asked if more wood chips could be brought to the path. Hallowell said this could be done this fall and can extend the chips all the way to the entrance.
5. **Headstone Straightening Training:** Hallowell, Griffin, Buzzell and a DPW crew, along with John Lord of the New Hampshire Old Graveyard Association went to the Cotton Cemetery and uncovered two buried headstones. Lord gave the group recommendations and instructions on how to properly uncover headstones and not

damage them. Lord offered to come back at the future date and show the Committee how to repair headstones. Sterry stated that a future goal would be to assemble a small crew of people who would be trained to uncover, straighten and repair headstones. A future project would be to straighten the headstones at Hall Cemetery, but the Committee also has a wide range of projects to accomplish. For example, the Cotton Cemetery burial doors are almost finished being repaired and the burial ground will be sandblasted. Sterry expressed an interest in having a re-dedication ceremony. Sterry expressed that with all the hard work of the Committee, the City and volunteers, it would be great to try to find a way to share the experience of restoring a colonial cemetery and if there was a way to get some recognition.

## 6. **Fundraising Pledge:**

- a. Sterry obtained a pledge from Eli Sokorelis for \$1,000 who also provided the names of a few other people in the vicinity of North Cemetery who were then contacted and expressed interest in the projects. A walk of North Cemetery with these interested parties will be conducted in the future.
  - b. Brooks suggested contacting Flat Bread and getting on their list for their Community Night when they donate a portion of the pizzas sold that night to a organization. Brooks will research and report back to the Committee. She also stated that it would be a good community outreach opportunity to make them aware of the Committee and its mission.
  - c. Sterry also stated that she has been in contact with the Athenaeum and they offered the opportunity to write a segment about the cemeteries and upon their approval, they would put it in their monthly letter and emails.
  - d. The Portsmouth Historical Society is considering conducting walks of all of the cemeteries in the fall or spring.
  - e. Boice stated that she is always looking for grants and other resources to fund the work that needs to be done. Boice also suggested that the Committee create a reference guide of its accomplishments and resources. Boice sees this as a guide to future Cemetery Committee members and to leave to them in puerility. Splaine asked how the Committee could visibly indicate the Committee as the entity that was responsible for taking the steps to the restoration of the cemeteries in Portsmouth, such as a sign noting the restoration was made possible by the Portsmouth Cemetery Committee. Discussion ensued regarding on-line methods to reach out to the community, such as Portsmouth Pulse, a local Facebook page, and the City newsletter. Polidura offered to post some media, advised that people like history and it would get people's attention if media postings were presented that way.
7. **Yellow Fever Research:** This project has been on hold until September when the students go back to UNH.
8. **Cemetery Presentation at the Portsmouth Library:** Sterry advised that the presentation was very well attended and received.
9. **Old Business:** Dinah Chase Whipple update – Forte advised that the family member was not able to attend the ceremony in May and looking at the end of August for the

installation of the headstone. Sterry will speak with Suzanne about re-scheduling the ceremony. Of note: the SAR event has been scheduled for September 28, 2024.

10. **Other Business:** Corin advised that the reconstruction of the seawall is going to take place at Union Cemetery on Monday, June 10, 2024. All the bush has been removed and is a great improvement.
11. **Public Comment: None**
12. **Next meeting:** Discussion ensued about whether to cancel the meetings scheduled for July 11, 2024 and August 1, 2024 until September. **Motion:** Griffin moved to postpone or reschedule these meetings and reconvene in September. Seconded by Splaine. **So moved.**

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 5, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.

13. **Adjournment: Motion:** Boice moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Forte. **All in favor.** Meeting adjourned at 5:00PM.

Meeting minutes prepared by:  
Barbara Zulkiewicz

Minutes Approved: September 5, 2024