



## CEMETERY COMMITTEE

### Meeting Minutes

November 2, 2023, 4:00PM

Meeting held in person at City Hall in Conference A  
1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth, NH

Members Present: Co-Chair Susan Sterry, Co-Chair Dee Dee Forte, Peter Splaine, Sue Polidura, Eva Boice, and Michael Griffin

Staff Present: Suzanne M. Woodland, Deputy City Manager / Regulatory Counsel

1. Call to order at 4:01PM. and roll call of the members as noted above.
2. Minutes: **Motion:** Polidura moved to approve the minutes of October 5, 2023, meeting. Seconded by Splaine. **Unanimously approved.**

Review mockup of signage for reinternment at North Cemetery. The sign will be bronze with gold printing from Crown Trophies, total cost of \$465. It will take 4-6 weeks to receive the plaque. Sterry described the capstones and mounting method of plaque discussed with Corin Hallowell of Department of Public Works. Suzanne spoke with Kathy Wheeler, the archaeologist and she approved the language on the plaque, i.e., change from “bones” to “skeletal remains”. The general consensus is that the sign is very tasteful. Sterry walked the space with Corin. Corin is looking for a boulder to mount the sign to and thought the boulder should be placed at an angle so as to prominently appear in the area. The reinternment ceremony will be the week of November 13th with further details to be shared with the Committee once confirmed. Sterry and Suzanne are still trying to confirm a minister or pastor to officiate the ceremony and anticipate that the Mayor would also say a few words.

**Motion:** Polidura moved to accept the mockup of the sign as presented at the cost of \$465. Seconded by Spaine. **Unanimously approved.**

3. Cotton Cemetery: Sterry described the schedule for repairs and replacement of the wooden doors for metal doors for the crypts. Director of Public Works, Peter Rice has given Corin the authorization to do this work. Griffin stated that he had found the original metal doors, which are completely intact for some of the crypts. Croteau Welding will be assisting in this project. Sterry indicated that the Department of Public Works is prepared to coordinate getting the stone wall inscribed to indicate that it is “Cotton Cemetery.” Sterry stated that the obelisk really stands out after being cleaned and Griffin stated that the Cotton Cemetery “has never looked so refreshed in his lifetime”. Sterry provided an update on the Union Cemetery, rockwall project. Suzanne stated that a new quote would be needed as the original quote did not cover all the section of the wall that was anticipated to be done as part of the

scope of work. We will get a new quote. We want to get the work done next season as we have the Moose Plate grant for \$20,000 to do that work. The permitting for the remainder section of the wall is being done as part of municipal project.

4. Wreaths Across America: Sterry provided a summary of the wreath program sponsored by the Elks Lodge. The Elks Lodge has ordered wreaths for all the Revolutionary War headstones in Portsmouth. Griffin stated that he has cleaned some of the headstones in his cemetery which were on the list the Elks Lodge received from the DAR. Sterry completed marking the headstones at the North and Union cemeteries by placing pink construction flags. The wreath placement will take place on December 16, 2023. Sterry was going to ask the DAR to assist by enlisting the Bonhomme Richard / Ranger Division who are 10–16 years old. They make sprigs with bows and a flag and mark the headstones, Sterry hopes the kids can help with the wreaths, as well. Sterry received a list from the Sons of the American Revolution, but the names aren't on the Elks list. Sterry stated she will research the discrepancy.
5. Catherine Moffatt Whipple: Sterry spoke with Ellen Brinker, head of the New England chapter of the Descendants of the Signors of the Declaration of Independence. They have received approval from the City to supply a plaque recognizing Mrs. Whipple, who is buried in Langdon's tomb. Her name is listed on the brownstone portion of the tomb. The plaque will be placed on the brownstone portion of the tomb on either side of the entrance. Information regarding the ceremony will be forthcoming.
6. Union Cemetery: The sign that states that the cemetery is in the New Hampshire Registry will be posted on the granite post outside of the gate by Corin from the DPW.
7. Dinah Whipple: Valerie Cunningham sent a request to the Committee regarding permission to put a headstone or memorial stone for Dinah Whipple, wife of Prince Whipple, next to Prince Whipple's headstone. It is believed that she was buried next to Prince, however, there is not a marker for her, however, there are markers close by for their daughter and granddaughter. At some point, a headstone was made for Prince Whipple. It is unknown who was responsible for that, but it was probably done in the 1800s due to the design of the headstone. Sterry asked Valerie to provide some documentation, to be assured, as much as possible, that Dinal is buried there. Valerie also stated that they will do the fundraising for this headstone or memorial stone. Polidura stated that it would be appropriate that it should be like Prince's headstone. Sterry further stated that Dinah Whipple deserves to be acknowledged due to the black school that she started. A brief history of Catherine Whipple and Dinah Whipple's relationship ensued, along with the Moffatt family involvement.

Boice asked if this was in the Committee's purview and part of its charge to allow people to do such things as approving headstones? Sterry stated that per the NH RSAs, every community should have a set of people to serve as trustees or a committee to oversee the cemeteries to make sure they are taken care of. Suzanne stated the City, which is responsible for the cemeteries, takes the recommendations

of the Committee into account. The Committee then further discussed developing an outline of the process to be followed when there are these types of requests relative to installing markers, plaques and such.

Forte and Boice volunteered work with the family to further discuss any potential headstone or marker and to report back to the Committee.

8. Other business: Sterry reported on the Hall Cemetery tree removal schedule. Work will likely take place on November 8, 9 and 10. They will start taking down the trees in the cemetery and will clean the path to the cemetery. The people in the neighborhood are very cooperative, appreciate that it is a revolutionary graveyard and its historical importance.
9. Public Comment: No public comment.
10. Next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, December 7, 2023 at 4:00PM.

**Motion:** Griffin moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Polidura.  
**Unanimously approved.** Adjourned at 4:56 p.m.

Draft Minutes prepared by:  
Barbara Zulkiewicz

Minutes Approved: January 4, 2024