

City of Dover

CEMETERY BOARD - MINUTES

Meeting Type: Regular Meeting
Meeting Location: Pine Hill Cemetery – **145 Court Street**, Dover, NH 03820
Meeting Date: **Tuesday, September 14, 2021**
Meeting Time: **7:00 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Rob Marggraf – Vice Chair, Susan Kelsch – Secretary, Grover Tasker, Belinda Labourdette, Roderick Blake – Alt. Member

MEMBERS ABSENT: Cathy Beaudoin – Alt. Member (excused); – Martha Haley – Chair (excused)

STAFF PRESENT: Sharon Sirois – Facilities, Grounds & Cemetery Superintendent; Michael Wilson – Facilities, Grounds & Cemetery Working Foreman

STAFF ABSENT: Meghan Moisan – Administrative Coordinator (excused)

1. **CALL TO ORDER & ATTENDANCE** – Vice Chair Marggraf called the meeting to order at 7 PM. Beaudoin and Haley had excused absences. Moisan was unable to attend as well (also excused). Labourdette arrived late but had called ahead.

2. **APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES** – Minutes were reviewed for June 8, 2021 meeting.

Motion: Tasker made a motion to accept the minutes

Second: Blake seconded the motion

Vote: U/A

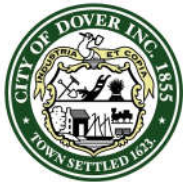
3. **CEMETERY STAFF UPDATES** – Employees stayed busy over the summer months keeping up with mowing, maintenance and cleanup of the cemetery. Despite a rainy July, prior drought conditions led to mandatory water-use restrictions through July & August. Several lots were re-seeded and a number of old stones straightened and/or repaired. Strong wind storms downed a few trees in the cemetery, but no stones were damaged. A vehicle struck 3 headstones in early September; all dies were knocked off their bases and 2 of the stones suffered minor chips/scratches. Two water leaks were repaired, which involved digging up the lines, but the spigots are back up and running again. Foot markers were installed as they arrived, and there are currently 7 monument foundations on the fall pour list. We had a record-breaking June with 20 graves sold (the most in a single month in nearly 17 years- Aug 2004); and 17 burials performed (the most in a single month in 20 years- June 2001). This was followed by 14 burials in July and 7 in August. Five graves were sold in July, then 17 in August. The office continues to receive numerous inquiries relating to lot ownership & burial rights, with many trying to make pre-arrangements in existing lots or having to purchasing new graves. Moisan has noticed that pre-need grave sales tend to coincide with the weather, explaining the high numbers in June & August (sunny & warm), with a drop during the rainy July.

Members discussed grave sales and questioned whether these were newer versus longtime residents. Sirois wasn't sure but noted there are a lot of non-resident sales. The City already charges a higher rate to folks out of town. The board has not had the discussion to limit grave sales and burials to residents only. The City has never felt that space is tight enough to merit this, although we know other towns in New Hampshire do so. Sirois estimated about 12 years ago the ratio of full burials to cremations was 60/40; however, now that ratio is around 30/70. That reduction in full burials has allowed more space.

Motion: Tasker made a motion to accept staff updates

Second: Kelsch seconded the motion

Vote: U/A



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4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Status of Sign for Roberts Cemetery (a.k.a. First Settlers)

Sirois read comments in an email from Haley to Moisan regarding the status of this sign. Haley spoke to Joanne's husband, Guy Eaton, 2 weeks ago about the sign for the Roberts Cemetery. The Daughters of the American Revolution said several months ago that they want to explore other sign companies. Guy is waiting to hear more from the DAR and he's still willing to pay for the sign.

B. Progress on New Columbaria

The City Council approved the 2 new columbaria and the bid was awarded to Watertown Engineering. Sirois is waiting on contracts and paperwork from the City's Finance Dept and expects to receive the go-ahead very soon. Sirois and others are hoping the columbaria can be acquired and put in place by November. If materials cannot be acquired by that time, then the installation may have to wait until spring.

C. Update on Request to Create Children's Garden in cemetery

Sirois met with Layne Case and Aubrey Lamontagne, the organizers of the Jasper's Heart non-profit organization. Temporary signs were put up in Group 24 on August 25th (the birthday of Aubrey's son Jasper) indicating the location where the future monument and bench will be installed. Layne and Aubrey are working with a landscaping company to acquire the monument, which will be a heart-shaped natural stone. They initially hoped to have it installed by October, but it has now been pushed out to next year.

D. Discuss Changes to Meeting Schedule

Sirois reviewed the need to re-vote on the schedule changes proposed at the last meeting. As previously discussed, the changes include eliminating the May meeting, which would reduce the number of Cemetery Board meetings per year from six to five, and moves the November meeting to December. The elections would also move from November to December. The Board had previously voted to approve these changes. However, per the City Attorney, changes to the Bylaws have to follow a formal procedure and any amendments must be sent out to members one month prior to the meeting. *If passed, the new meeting schedule would be on the second Tuesday of the following months: February, April, June, September, and December.*

Motion: Tasker made a motion to adopt the new meeting schedule as discussed.

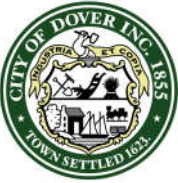
Second: Blake seconded the motion

Vote: U/A

5. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review of Cemetery Rules & Regulations

Sirois explained that staff thought it would be best to go through the rules & regulations in-house first. The proposed changes would be presented to the Board for final review once finished. Printed copies of the Cemetery Rules & Regulations are available from Sirois and Moisan. They have also been provided by email.



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Tasker suggested specifying a time limit on cremation services arranged by families. These are often organized without the guiding hand of funeral directors to limit the time spent at the grave site. As a result, families tend to spend extended time at the grave, preventing employees from completing the burial and moving on to other tasks. It was agreed that this timeframe should be discussed with the family at the time the burial is scheduled, as well as imposing a fee for those going beyond the limit. After the set timeframe, family would be given the opportunity to step away while the burial is completed, but are welcome to stay at the grave after, if they choose. The Board agreed with Tasker's suggestion of 45 minutes. It was also recommended that a time limit be added for full burials as well, for consistency.

B. Letter of recommendation to re-purpose the Pine Hill Cemetery barn area (South Pine St)

Sirois brought up the request for a letter of recommendation from the Cemetery Board in regard to the disposition of the old cemetery maintenance barn. The Master Plan notes in section 2.1 that Building Envelope Specialists recommends this building be demolished due to the condition of the building and lack of efficient programming. It goes into detail on the deficiencies of the space, but one not included at that time was a rodent infestation that required weeks/months of treatment. The building dates back to at least the 1890s, and is in notably poor condition.

Sirois noted that other City departments are lacking in storage space and may have eyes on this spot. The Board discussed a concern on who would be responsible in the event any records of materials or equipment stored here were damaged, with the building in the current condition. The Cemetery Board agreed that our first recommendation is to demolish the building. Sirois will draft a letter to that effect, to be discussed and signed by the Board.

A lack of parking for nearby apartment buildings gave spark to the idea that maybe part of the property could be sold or utilized for off street parking. The Board is opposed to selling any part of the cemetery property, given the potential for future needs of the cemetery.

In discussion during the development of the master plan, several options for this area were discussed, including a new structure for cold storage, redevelopment of the area as burial spaces, i.e. niche walls in a multi-tiered area, lawn crypts (not a popular idea, Elmwood Cemetery in Methuen MA cited as a reference). The Cemetery Board would like to be included in ideas or proposals for the re-purposing of this area.

C. Membership Terms - Kelsch questioned what needs to happen when the 3-year terms of Members are completed. (Three-year terms are noted in the Cemetery Board By-Laws.) Marggraf stated she should be receiving an email from the City Clerk regarding the renewal. Sirois agreed to follow up with Susan Mistretta.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Labourdette made a motion to adjourn at 7:40 PM

Second: Tasker seconded the motion

Vote: U/A