



CITY OF DOVER

CEMETERY BOARD - MINUTES

Meeting Type: Regular Meeting
Meeting Location: Pine Hill Cemetery - 145 Court Street, Dover, NH
Meeting Date: **Tuesday, September 20, 2022**
Meeting Time: **7:00 pm**

Members Present: Vice Chairman Rob Margraaf, Sue Kelsch, Grover Tasker, Belinda Labourdette

Alternate Members Present: Cathy Beaudoin, Roderick Blake

Staff Present: Sharon Sirois, Facilities, Grounds & Cemetery Superintendent, Jennifer Bretz, Facilities, Grounds & Cemetery Office Manager

Public Present: Chris Drown, Jackie Karl, Diane Schroeder, Daughters of the American Revolution
Kathleen Blake, Tess Beem, Committee for Racial Equity & Inclusion Committee

1. Call to Order & Attendance

Meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m.

The board notes the resignation of Chairman Martha Haley.

At this time in the meeting, we jumped ahead to item 4A

2. Approval of Minutes of June 14, 2022

Motion: Margraff made the motion to approve the minutes, Blake seconded.

Vote: U/a

3. Cemetery Staff Updates

Cemetery Staff Updates: After our meeting in June we conducted 4 ash interments, in July we had 4 regular burials and 7 ash interments. August saw 1 full burial with 10 interments of ashes. Over the past three months we have sold 16 full graves, 7 cremation spaces, and 3 niches. The two foundations for the new columbaria were installed and we have sent out letters to monument dealers regarding the upcoming pouring of foundations in October. Ten monuments were set and 29 flat markers were installed over the last three months. Two benches for the Children's Memory Garden were set.

The "Voices From the Cemetery" tours, put on by the Woodman Institute, will be held in Pine Hill Cemetery on October 22nd and 23rd, from 10 AM to 4 PM each day. There will be 14 scripted scenes and a table with information regarding events being planned for the 400th anniversary.

In addition to the cemetery functions, employees have completed or investigated hundreds of work orders for buildings, other facilities, and grounds over the summer. Most recently they began shutting down the outdoor pool, and are still mowing all the public turf areas, parks, and athletic fields. We are currently employing 2 seasonal as 3 have gone back to college. We are at full staff with 6 full-time maintenance people, our working foreman, part-time secretary Karen, and happy to welcome our new office manager/cemetery coordinator, Jennifer Bretz.

Motion: Blake made the motion to approve the Staff Updates, Labourdette seconded.

Vote: U/a

4. Unfinished Business

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

Tess Beem, co-chair of the Committee for Racial Equity and Inclusion (CREI) noted that their committee, in their September 2022 meeting, had a lengthy discussion about the sign. The CREI committee made a motion to request the following from the Cemetery Board:



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1. That the Cemetery Board recommends the City pursue a third-party title search to ascertain who is the legal owner of the property known as the Dover First Settlers' Burying Ground. Along with this research, more work could be done to ascertain who is buried in this property, and further information about the property's ownership history.
2. That the Cemetery Board be open to collaboration with the CREI for a more comprehensive discussion about the Dover First Settlers' Burying Ground, the representation of the Abenaki peoples and any other groups who should be represented, whether that be related to the educational signage or a project to rename the space.
3. That the Cemetery Board does not accept the donation of the sign from the Daughters of the American Revolution at this time, but rather put a pause on the sign in order to follow through on points 1 and 2.

(This was put in writing to the Cemetery Board, prior to this meeting)

The CREI members note that their committee disavows any signage that is not historically accurate, and that is why they are asking for the above points as relates to the DAR's proposed sign. The phrase "First Settlers" in the sign is not accurate.

Sirois gave a brief history of the DAR sign, which is documented in minutes from previous Cemetery Board meetings. She noted that the Cemetery Board did vote to accept the donation of the sign, but the City Council, which has the ultimate power to approve it, chose to table the issue of accepting or declining the sign at a meeting in June 2022.

The representatives of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) spoke, noting that they have enlisted the services of a professional genealogist in doing further research on who is buried in this cemetery. This genealogist produced a list limited only to those persons identified in reputable sources as being buried there. This list (a spreadsheet of information) was provided to all in this meeting. The DAR wants to stress that they have always acted from the point of view that a sign on this property would benefit the City of Dover, would honor the founders of the City of Dover, help educate the community, and help residents with genealogical research.

All persons at this meeting agreed that an important aspect of the sign would be a link or reference to the City Library's Web Site, which includes more history of the property, and a list of all those buried there, according to research conducted by the City. The DAR initially had planned for a QR code to serve this purpose, but now the DAR is recommending only a text Web link reference to the Library Website.

We discussed that this cemetery has long been known as the Roberts Cemetery, because of its connection to the Roberts family, and neither the CREI nor anyone in this meeting has any objection to mentioning the Roberts name on the sign or in the historic information about the cemetery.

The DAR believes that First Settlers Burying Ground is an accurate description of the space, and the name should be retained. The DAR respectfully asks that the Cemetery Board accept the sign as the verbiage is written.



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Much discussion followed, debating the merits of the sign as proposed, the potential for changing its verbiage, the need to research the true ownership of the property, and the potential for changing the name of the burying ground altogether (which would then also require a change to the verbiage on the sign).

The DAR members noted that no matter what is decided, the verbiage will still need to go to the national DAR body for its approval. This step has not yet happened.

Motion: Rod Blake made a motion that the Cemetery Board table any further action or discussion on the DAR sign and/or a name change for the cemetery at this time. Kelsch seconded.

Vote: U/a

Motion: Blake made a motion that the Cemetery Board officially request that the City Manager propose that the City perform a title search to ascertain the ownership of the First Settlers Burying Ground aka Roberts' Cemetery property. Labourdette seconded.

Vote: U/a

Sirois will follow up with the City Manager and City Attorney on this point.

B. Status of Children's Memory Garden in Cemetery

See note in cemetery staff updates

C. Fire Department Request Regarding Fire Department Lot

See note in cemetery staff updates. The Jasper's Heart organization is still waiting for the sculptor who is creating the heart-shaped stone. The organization is planning an event at the site on Oct 15, which is known nationally as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day.

5. New Business

A. Elections in the December meeting. One vacancy on the Board.

6. Adjournment

Motion: Tasker made the motion to adjourn at 8:26 pm, Margraff seconded.

Vote: U/a