

CITY OF DOVER

CEMETERY BOARD - MINUTES

Meeting Type: Regular Meeting
Meeting Location: Pine Hill Cemetery - 145 Court Street, Dover, NH
Meeting Date: **Tuesday, September 12, 2023**
Meeting Time: **7:00 pm**

Members Present: Vice Chairman Belinda Labourdette, Secretary Susan Kelsch, Cathy Beaudoin, Grover Tasker

Excused Members Absent: Chairman Rob Margraff

Alternate Members Present: Roderick Blake, Katie Smith

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

Members of the Public: Kathleen Blake, Jessica Lamontagne

AUDIO NOT AVAILABLE

1. Call to Order & Attendance

Meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes of June 13, 2023

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

Vote: U/a

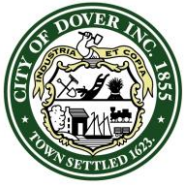
3. Cemetery Staff Updates

During the months of June, July and August, cemetery staff conducted 14 full burials and 24 ash interments. There has been 1 full burial and 1 ash interment, so far, in September. Ten full graves, 3 cremation spaces and 5 niches were sold between June 1st and September 12th. Over the last three and a half months 13 flat markers were installed.

Two foundations were poured. One foundation was poured by hand and the other was for the Black Heritage Trail Marker for famous Dover resident Nellie Brown Mitchell. An event for the unveiling of this monument was held on July 15th, 2023. The event was well attended and was hosted by The Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire.

Two water lines that were repaired in the Sections and one was repaired in the groups. These water lines service the various spigots located throughout the cemetery. Over the summer months staff struggled to keep up with the cemetery mowing, due to lack of seasonal workers, and spent many overtime hours working to cut grass and string trim around monuments between 3 and 5 or 6 pm, typically, Mondays through Thursdays. If they were in for Saturday tasks, they would stay to mow, also.

In tasks not related to the Cemetery, Staff addressed, investigated or resolved 246 service calls and generated 444 work orders. As of today, there have been 32 service calls and 58 work orders. These tasks include building maintenance, sign and tree work, other vegetation management, cleaning up graffiti, repairing vandalism, park and swimming pool maintenance, lining fields for soccer, softball



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or baseball games, field maintenance, community trail maintenance, irrigation system maintenance, investigating traffic signal issues and addressing street light issues whenever possible.

We had employed two seasonal employees for June and July, gained a third at the beginning of August but they all went back to college mid-August. At the moment, we have one seasonal employee for 20 hours a week. Staff was involved with preparatory tasks required for the various 400th anniversary celebration events.

Motion: Tasker made the motion to approve the Staff Updates, Kelsch seconded.

Vote: U/a

4. Unfinished Business

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

The motion to accept the plaque for the First Settlers Burying Ground as proposed by the Daughters of the American Revolution remains with the City Council. The City Council has tabled the motion for now, no updates.

B. Abandonment of Roberts/First Settler's Cemetery resolution for City Council

City Council met July 12. One of the agenda items was a motion to declare the First Settler's Cemetery abandoned. Belinda Labourdette and Kate Smith were present. After brief discussion, the City Council voted to declare the Roberts Cemetery/First Settler's Cemetery abandoned.

C. Discussion with the City's Committee for Racial Equity & Inclusion Committee

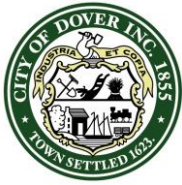
Now that the First Settler's Cemetery has been declared abandoned, the board would like to formerly propose that the name be changed to Roberts Cemetery. The board believes that the name change will honor the history of that cemetery. There was discussion regarding the possibility of working with the Committee for Racial Equity & Inclusion to make a presentation at one of the City Council's workshop sessions however this may not be necessary.

Beaudoin stated that she would contact Jackie Carl of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The D.A.R. had proposed a plaque over a year ago which triggered this entire discussion. The board feels that they should speak to the D.A.R. before making any proposals to the city. When the board is ready to propose a resolution, Kelsch will speak to the City Manager.

Motion: Tasker made the motion to have the cemetery board endorse the renaming of the First Settlers Cemetery to Roberts Cemetery, Beaudoin seconded.

Vote: U/a

D. Black Heritage Trail Marker - Nellie Mitchell Brown



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The NH Black Heritage Trail marker, to mark the graves of Nellie Brown Mitchell and other members of the Brown and Mitchell families, was installed in June. A ceremony to unveil the marker took place on July 15. Beaudoin noted that it was a very nice event.

E. Rules for New Columbaria

At the June meeting, Sirois gave each member proposed rules for the new columbaria. While there are still some niches in the older Columbarium that are bigger and will follow the 2009 text and template rules, the new Columbarium will use the new 2023 text and template rules. However, in June we did not make a motion to accept these rules.

Motion: Blake made the motion to approve the new columbaria rules presented at the June meeting, Tasker seconded.

Vote: U/a

5. New Business

A. Willey Family Marker for First Settlers Burying Ground

Cathy Watson, a resident of Olympia, Washington, sent an email to city staff requesting that a marker be placed in the Roberts Cemetery/First Settlers Cemetery in honor of her ancestors. She believes that William Willey, Samuel Willey, Sr., Mary Canney Willey, and Samuel Willey, Jr. are buried there, but no markers for them are visible. She is fully prepared to pay for the marker as well as the installation of the marker.

The board agreed that more evidence is necessary other than Watson's statement that the Willey's were indeed buried in the Roberts Cemetery/First Settlers Cemetery.

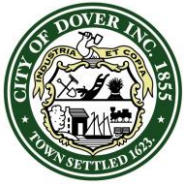
Sirois checked her information from the Daughters of the American Revolution. The D.A.R. previously conducted research concerning who is buried within the cemetery, and found the names of her four relatives in the list. The board agreed that it was enough evidence for them that the Willey family members were indeed buried there.

Sirois believes this is the only time such a request has been made of the City, during her time as superintendent. Hopefully, agreeing to this marker does not set a precedent that will result in a flood of similar requests.

Motion: Beaudoin made the motion to allow a Willey Family marker with the provision that the base of the marker is not to exceed 52 inches, Tasker seconded.

Vote: U/a

B. Green Burials



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NH State Representative and Dover resident, Jessica LaMontagne, stated that she knows that the City does not allow for green burials in its cemeteries, and she feels that this policy should be re-considered. She believes there is strong interest for green burials now and this interest will only increase in the future.

Currently, the only cemetery in Dover that allows for green burials is the Quaker cemetery. The definition of green burials was discussed. It was also noted that there are many “shades” of green when referring to green burials. One common idea is the option to be buried without embalming or any chemicals, in an entirely biodegradable casket, but using the normal burial process and installing a grave marker. A more extreme view insists that the grave be dug entirely without the use of fossil fuels.

Sirois noted that many of the Muslim families bury their loved ones without a casket at all, with the body touching the earth. In this case the families themselves handle the body. LaMontagne noted a new trend to designate a grassy field as the location for burials without caskets and with the body processed into an organic material (not cremation). The organic material is buried in the field, without marker.

Sirois noted that one important barrier to what many would consider a green burial is the City’s rule that all full burials within the city cemeteries include a concrete vault in which the casket is placed into. This is to keep the site from caving in over time and keeps the grounds of the cemetery from becoming uneven.

LaMontagne proposed that she bring more information about green burials to the December meeting. Without making any motions or promises for the future, the Cemetery Board is open to hearing more, and generally agrees that green burials are worth considering.

6. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held on December 12, 2023.

7. Adjournment

Motion: Blake made the motion to adjourn at 8:20 pm, Smith seconded.

Vote: U/a