

CITY OF DOVER

CEMETERY BOARD - MINUTES

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

Members Present: Chairman Rob Margraff, Secretary Susan Kelsch, Cathy Beaudoin, Grover Tasker, City Councilor Robert Warach

Excused Members Absent: Vice-Chairman Belinda Labourdette

Alternate Members Present: Roderick Blake

Excused Alternate Members Absent: Katie Smith

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

Members of the Public: Fran Chickering, Jessica Lamontagne, City Councilor Linnea Nemeth

1. Call to Order & Attendance

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

2. Approval of Minutes of September 12, 2023

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

Vote: U/a

3. Cemetery Staff Updates

During the months of September, October and November, cemetery staff conducted 8 full burials and 10 ash interments. There has been 1 full burial and 1 ash interment, so far, in December. 10 full graves, 10 cremation spaces and 3 niches were sold between September 1st and December 12th.

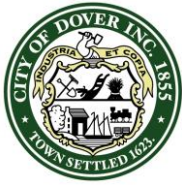
Over the last three and a half months 14 flat markers were installed. In October, nine foundations were poured so the monuments could be put in place.

Employees were still mowing through the month of October and into the first part of November and then switched to leaf collection and pick-up, which is almost finished now. Leaf pick-up in the parks has been attended to, as well.

In tasks not related to the Cemetery, Staff addressed, investigated or resolved 255 service calls and generated 447 work orders. These tasks include building maintenance, sign and tree work, setting up and taking down the voting polls, cleaning up graffiti and vandalism, winterizing the outdoor swimming pool, community trail maintenance, winterized irrigation systems, investigating traffic signal issues, repairing traffic signals and addressing street light issues whenever possible.

Cemetery Superintendent, Sharon Sirois, informed the Cemetery Board that she will be retiring on January 19, 2024. The Cemetery Board thanked her for her many years of service to the City and wish her well in retirement.

Blake asked who has control over the lights in Dover.



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Sirois stated that all the tall silver street lights are owned and maintained by Eversource. The LED lights on wooden poles are maintained by the city of Dover. The small black downtown/décor lights are maintained by the City of Dover. Twenty-eight of the red, yellow, green traffic signals are maintained by the City of Dover. The City does not maintain the traffic signals on state Hwy 9 or 125, nor on Boston Harbor Rd.

Motion: Tasker made the motion to accept the staff updates, Blake seconded.

Vote: U/a

4. Unfinished Business

A. Green Burials Presentation - NH State Rep. Jessica Lamontagne

NH State Representative Jessica LaMontagne brought a number of documents to outline the current state of green burials in New Hampshire, Maine, and Dover specifically. She believes that many citizens are interested in green burials, and the City should try to accommodate these requests. She outlined 5 key points in favor of green burials/natural cemeteries.

(Handouts were provided. See attached)

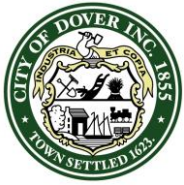
She believes that the City has a duty under a NH State statute that requires municipalities to provide “suitable cemeteries for the interment of deceased persons”. Title XXVI, Chapter 289 CEMETERIES 289:2.

She also believes that an important barrier in the City of Dover is the rules of Pine Hill Cemetery that require each burial to include a vault structure.

The board discussed the definition of green burials and natural cemeteries, the recent history of green burials in the City of Dover, potential barriers to the practice, reasons why citizens may want a green burial, other nearby towns that do have a capacity for green burials, and other issues.

Rep. LaMontagne also made the case for reviewing mowing practices in the City cemeteries, and this could be independent of any decisions we made concerning green burials. She believes the City is not obligated to provide perfectly well-mown cemeteries, and there are many reasons to let the grass grow a little wild.

The board did not make any specific decisions or make any motions. It was agreed to consider the issue and discuss it again in future meetings.



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B. 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.

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

This issue is settled, so this item will not appear in the Feb 2024 meeting agenda. City Council met July 12, 2023 and approved a motion to declare the First Settler's Cemetery abandoned.

D. Discussion w/City's Committee for Racial Equity & Inclusion Committee

Now that the First Settler's Burying Ground has been declared abandoned, its name can be changed. The Cemetery Board made a motion endorsing a change to Roberts Cemetery in our September 2023 meeting.

Beaudoin did approach the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) concerning a name change to Roberts Cemetery. The DAR has no objection to this.

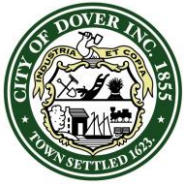
The Committee for Racial Equity & Inclusion has discussed the matter and stated that they are not willing to endorse this change. Councilor Nemeth stated their objections: After some research with sources provided from the City Manager and the Dover Public Library, there is evidence that the Roberts family had "servants" listed among their property in the early years of Dover, and Councilor Nemeth feels that this raises a question of whether these servants were indentured servants or enslaved peoples. The sources do not clarify if they were or weren't, and so that doubt stops the Committee for Racial Equity and Inclusion from endorsing the name change, and Councilor Nemeth from making a resolution to the City Council. The Committee wants to pause on any further motions until more research can be done on the Roberts family.

Beaudoin noted that in her many years of researching Dover history she has never heard of credible proof of the Roberts family being slave owners. However, she agreed to do further research looking at this question. The Cemetery Board agreed to make no further motions until Beaudoin has completed this research. This item will stay on the Unfinished Business agenda for our Feb 2024 meeting.

5. New Business

A. Internment of Samuel Dame in PHC per request of NH

Mark Doperalski, the State Archaeologist, NH Division of Historical Resources, has requested that human remains that were accidentally excavated during some ground work at the Cochecho Country Club be buried in the Pine Hill Cemetery. These remains were excavated in the 1980s, and have been sitting in a state building in Concord ever since.



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The Dame family cemetery that is close to Cochecho Country Club, Doperalski first thought these remains were a child called Samuel Dame. However, later evidence calls that into question. The child will be buried as an unknown juvenile Caucasian, approximately, 5 years old.

Motion: Marggraf made a motion that the Cemetery Board endorses a plan that the City of Dover bury the remains of this unknown juvenile that were originally buried in land near the Cochecho Country Club, and have for the past 30 years been stored in a state building in Concord, in the baby section of Pine Hill Cemetery, and waive any fees related to this burial, Kelsch seconded.

Vote: U/a

6. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held on February 13, 2024.

7. Adjournment

Motion: Tasker made the motion to adjourn at 8:04, Blake seconded.

Vote: U/a