

CITY OF DOVER

CEMETERY BOARD - MINUTES

Meeting Type: Regular Meeting
Meeting Location: Pine Hill Cemetery - 145 Court Street, Dover, NH
Meeting Date: **Tuesday, April 9, 2024**
Meeting Time: **5:30 pm**

Members Present: Chairman Rob Marggraf, Vice-Chairman Belinda Labourdette, Secretary Susan Kelsch, Cathy Beaudoin, Grover Tasker, City Councilor Robert Warach

Alternate Members Present: Roderick Blake, Katie Smith

Staff Present: Mark Colonna, Facilities, Grounds & Cemetery Superintendent, Jennifer Bretz, Facilities, Grounds & Cemetery Office Manager

1. Call to Order & Attendance

Meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes of December 12, 2023

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

Vote: U/a

3. Cemetery Staff Updates

During the month of March 2024, the Facilities, Grounds, and Cemeteries Division received 47 service calls, of which 42 were closed (completed), and 82 work orders, of which 66 were completed and closed.

One full and four ash internments were conducted this month. Six graves were sold this month. Orders are still coming in for spring monument installations. Crews will have to excavate and pour concrete foundations for these installations. City is still receiving bids for this work.

There were 10 work orders pertaining to cemetery issues. Surprisingly little damage in the cemeteries from the snowstorm on April 4. The storm before that did result in the loss of a very large limb from one of the trees in Pine Hill Cemetery, and this resulted in taking down the entire tree. The City is now providing a curbside service to all residents to request a pick-up for large tree limbs that fell as a result of the April 4 storm.

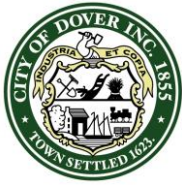
The City employees are working to prepare grounds and cemeteries as usual in the spring. This includes getting ready for Memorial Day in the cemeteries, working on the Jenny Thompson Pool, and preparing the baseball fields and parks.

Mark Colonna recently accepted the position of Superintendent, Facilities, Grounds, & Cemeteries, and this is his first meeting with the Cemetery Board.

The City is preparing for Memorial Day, although the department is not fully staffed. The department is looking to hire some seasonal employees, including high school students. The Woodman Museum is doing a special ceremony in Pine Hill Cemetery, as they usually do on Memorial Day.

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

Vote: U/a



CITY OF DOVER

CEMETERY BOARD - MINUTES

Meeting Type: Regular Meeting
Meeting Location: Pine Hill Cemetery - 145 Court Street, Dover, NH
Meeting Date: **Tuesday, April 9, 2024**
Meeting Time: **5:30 pm**

4. Unfinished Business

A. Green Burials

In Dec 2023, the Cemetery Board agreed that we would think about the possibilities for green burials, after a request and presentation from resident and NH state representative Jessica LaMontagne. Nothing specific has been done on this issue since the presentation.

Superintendent Colonna noted that from his viewpoint, the vaults are the biggest issue stopping the adoption of green burials. The vaults are needed to keep the gravesite from collapsing and being a hazard for walking. The vaults also keep the ground even, which helps with mowing. Also, Superintendent Colonna is opposed to any changes that would result in more work for his staff, which is handling as much as they can now.

We discussed some of the options for green burials, reviewing many points that we discussed in December. We noted the bottomless vaults used for Muslim burials. We noted the need to consider the safety of the City workers, and what we are asking them to do related to the handling of bodies.

We also question the amount of current demand for green burials. Demand is currently very low. We would need to consider the financial implications of changing procedures and making green burials an option for Dover citizens. We discussed the Quaker cemetery that was previously available for green burials, but is no longer an option. We know that other cities in New Hampshire and Maine have made cemeteries available for green burials (Jessica LaMontagne provided us with documentation in December).

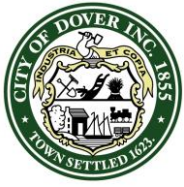
We proposed the idea of designating a separate plot of land as the green burial cemetery, and the rules for that cemetery will be different. This plot of land possibly would not be mowed, would not include vaults, nor coffins, nor headstones.

Superintendent Colonna noted that private citizens are able to bury privately on their own land, meeting all the green burial ideas as they choose.

Councilor Warach noted that there is a resolution coming in front of the City Council on April 10, to formally ask the Cemetery Board to spend time researching green burials, including financial issues, staff issues, and what changes to the cemetery code would need to be made. After the Cemetery Board research and recommendations, then the City Council would make final decisions. Anyone on the Cemetery Board is welcome to attend the City Council meeting and comment on that resolution during Public Forum.

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

Cathy Beaudoin reported that Jackie Carl from the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) has been in touch, and Jackie wrote a long letter with her opinion about the naming of this cemetery. However, at this time the DAR is stepping back from the entire issue. While the



CITY OF DOVER

CEMETERY BOARD - MINUTES

Meeting Type: Regular Meeting
Meeting Location: Pine Hill Cemetery - 145 Court Street, Dover, NH
Meeting Date: **Tuesday, April 9, 2024**
Meeting Time: **5:30 pm**

DAR does not have an official capacity to make decisions about the name of the cemetery, the Cemetery Board was trying to work with them to propose a name that they would endorse.

The Racial Equity and Inclusion Committee is still involved in this issue. Dover City Councilor Linnea Nemeth asked Cathy Beaudoin to research the Roberts family. After extensive research, Beaudoin found two brothers in the 4th or 5th generation of the Roberts family, in the early 1700s, who were slave holders. These two brothers are buried in this cemetery. While the evidence is somewhat unclear, two enslaved persons named Pompeii and Caesar are noted in sources, connected to these Roberts.

However, Beaudoin believes that the original member of the Roberts family, Thomas Roberts, is worth noting. He was a Quaker, he was anti-slavery, and seemed to be a good citizen of Dover. He is buried in this cemetery. On the strength of this history, Beaudoin proposes that the name of the cemetery be changed to the "Thomas Roberts Cemetery". We agreed this is a good idea.

Motion: Marggraf made a motion to approach the Racial Equity and Inclusion (REI) Committee with a proposed name change of the First Settler's Burying Ground to Thomas Roberts Cemetery, for their consideration, Kelsch seconded.

Vote: u/a

5. New Business

A. Time Change of Cemetery Board Meetings

This meeting was held at 5:30PM. Superintendent Colonna proposed the meeting time be changed permanently. After some discussion, with some reservations from the Cemetery Board members, we agreed to try the 5:30 time for now.

We discussed communicating changes. Cemetery Board prefers that discussions of this nature happen at the meetings, rather than through email if possible.

Kelsch noted that the Dover City Web site needs to be changed in order to reflect the change in meeting time. We believe the City Clerk controls this information on the Web site.

6. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held on June 11, 2024.

7. Adjournment

Motion: Tasker made the motion to adjourn at 6:14, Blake seconded.

Vote: U/a