

CITY OF DOVER

CEMETERY BOARD - MINUTES

Meeting Type: Regular Meeting
Meeting Location: Pine Hill Cemetery - 145 Court Street, Dover, NH
Meeting Date: **Thursday, September 19, 2024**
Meeting Time: **5:30 pm**

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

Members Absent: Chair Rob Marggraf (unexcused)

Alternate Members Present: Katie Smith

Alternate Members Absent: Roderick Blake (resigned)

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 5:34 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes of August 13, 2024

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

Vote: U/a

3. Cemetery Staff Updates

During the month of August, the Facilities, Grounds, and Cemeteries Division received 67 service requests, of which 59 were closed (completed), and 95 work orders, of which 75 were completed and closed.

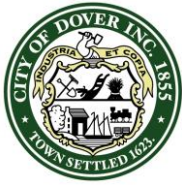
There were 14 work orders pertaining to cemetery issues, 28 work orders pertaining to facility issues, 23 work orders pertaining to grounds issues, 15 work orders related to sign issues, 11 work orders related to traffic and street light issues, and 4 work orders pertaining to tree issues.

Three full burials, and four ash internments were conducted in the Pine Hill Cemetery this month. Two full graves and two cremation spaces were sold this month. Eleven foot-markers were installed. Several monument companies are still delivering and installing monuments on the foundations that our crews excavated and poured several months ago.

Facility, Grounds, and Cemetery crews continue to work tirelessly mowing and trimming the entire Pine Hill Cemetery, with a second full-time crew mowing and trimming numerous parks and other city properties. Unfortunately, our seasonal employees have to go back to school at the end of the month to various high schools and colleges, considerably slowing down the pace of mowing the cemetery.

As part of the “Back to School” process, crews turned on and tested all of the school zone traffic lights.

The City of Dover flag at City Hall was joined by the Indonesian flag for Indonesian Independence Day on August 17th. Indonesian Independence Day celebrates Indonesia’s Declaration of Independence from the Netherlands in 1945.



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Crews have been preparing materials and equipment to get ready for the upcoming shutdown and renovation of Adventure Park on Henry Law Avenue.

Colonna noted that the Cemetery maintenance crew is very short-handed. Recently the City was very hard-pressed to serve a Muslim family who requested a burial over the weekend. Bretz and Colonna came to the Cemetery to work that Saturday, and the burial was completed with help from City employee Bill Courier.

Another Jewish temple out of Newington met with Colonna and Bretz to discuss purchasing a section of graves to be used by their members. The meeting went well, they will get back to the City if they want to go ahead.

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

Vote: U/a

4. Unfinished Business

A. Green Burials - Review/Provide Recommendations to City Council

Several members of the Cemetery Board have been researching green burials. At this meeting we received materials from the New Hampshire Funeral Resources and Education, and a "Going Out Green" presentation (private organization).

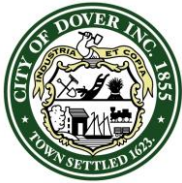
Our guest was Patrick McCarthy, Maintenance Manager and Sexton of cemeteries for the City of Lebanon. He was joined by Doug Boisvert, Cemetery Superintendent with the City of Lebanon, although Boisvert stayed mostly quiet through our discussion.

We called Patrick and put him on speakerphone in the middle of the table for the meeting.

Patrick worked for 12 years as a funeral director before joining the City as Cemetery Sexton. Patrick noted that Lebanon is about half the size of the City of Dover.

Patrick offered his insights on a number of issues, including:

- Dealing with liability for the City and funeral homes for what they call "natural" burials
- The process of making natural burials available in Lebanon took a little over two years; at times the discussions were very contentious
- Worked to some degree with the Green Burial Council
- Patrick and the others in Lebanon had to try to sift through information that is out there in the world about green/natural burials, which may or may not be factual
- Issue of storing bodies during the winter, waiting for natural burials
- Major study of how deep to bury; settled on 48 inches in depth, with an 18-inch mound over top; also, the natural burial graves are bigger in area



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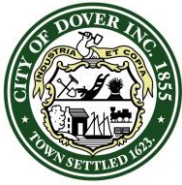
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- Two natural burials have been completed, after about 18 months of being available, 14 have sold (two residents, the others non-residents)
- Price of natural burials; Lebanon is probably the least expensive in the state; price is higher for natural burials than standard burials, this reflects the deeper and larger grave required for natural burials as well as anticipated higher cost of maintenance
- Question of selling specific sites vs just selling “the next spot” in the natural burial cemetery (known as selling “at need”); McCarthy was in favor of at need sales, but this was overruled by the Lebanon City Council; this introduces problems in driving over existing graves in order to get to a pre-sold grave that is boxed in
- City of Lebanon has a hard rule: no hand digging of graves by city staff
- Question of what to do if the family does not hold up their end; McCarthy noted that the City of Lebanon pushes the responsibility to the funeral homes; City of Lebanon is not hands-on in any type of burial
- Of the two natural burials that have been completed, machine digging, and machine back-fill were used and the funeral homes provided the lowering device
- City of Lebanon does require a simple casket for natural burials
- McCarthy believes it is very important to involve the Superintendent and the funeral homes from an early stage in the natural burials’ decision; important to lean on their experience
- City of Lebanon recognizes that unusual maintenance issues will come up for years to come as a result of natural burials which will incur financial costs
- Still some concern from McCarthy about the width of natural graves, danger of disturbing an existing grave; casket helps deal with the danger of disturbing previous burials; no compacting is used
- As for mowing and maintaining: Lebanon “knocks the brush down” on a yearly basis, in case they have to get into graves that are in the back of the cemetery
- About infectious diseases: family must provide a death certificate for all-natural burials; Lebanon Sexton will review and decide; worry about staff coming in contact with bodily fluids from an un-embalmed body

McCarthy generously agreed to answer questions in the future. Thank you to Lebanon for their time and expertise. Kelsch will ask him what other towns he is talking to, he noted that he has three other similar meetings coming up in the next month.

We discussed the possibility of asking more cities to talk to us, for example the city of Montpelier, VT. There is no appetite for pursuing this with other cities at this time.

We discussed what we will do to fulfill the requirements of the resolution from the City Council. Warach noted that the time box no longer exists for our work. He alerted the City Council at their last meeting that we would need more time.



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Colonna asked if we are ready to take a vote on green burials, whether to recommend to offer green burials or not. All members of the Cemetery Board who spoke up stated that we are not yet ready.

We believe we will ultimately create a report that summarizes what we have learned in our research, what would have to change in order to support green burials, what questions still remain, and our recommendation. That might be presented as an interim recommendation until a larger task force or persons with greater authority than us have taken up the question. Again, the issue of staffing in different departments would be a consideration for the City Council.

Tasker also noted we have to remember maintenance issues, the appearance of a green cemetery section, how the public will respond. Dover is blessed with very attractive cemeteries, how do green burials impact that.

No motions concerning green burials at this time. We will take up the question in our next meeting (December).

B. Status of Sign for Robert Cemetery (aka First Settlers)

The Cemetery Board would like to amend the motion from July concerning the new name of the First Settlers Burying Ground.

Motion: Kelsch made the motion make an amendment to the previous motion and moves to change the name of the First Settlers Burying Ground on Dover Point Rd to Thomas Roberts (1600-1674) Cemetery, Tasker seconded.

Vote: u/a

Kelsch will email Mike Joyal about this, with a brief write-up. Email will go to everyone in this meeting plus a few others.

5. New Business

Motion: Tasker made a motion to allow the use of Pine Hill Cemetery for the Voices from the Cemetery event presented by the Woodman Museum on October 12 and 13, Kelsch seconded.

Vote: u/a

6. Next Meeting Date

December 10, 2024

7. Adjournment

Motion: Kelsch made the motion to adjourn at 6:40 p.m., Labourdette seconded.

Vote: U/a