



CITY OF DOVER

CEMETERY BOARD - MINUTES

Meeting Type: Regular Meeting
Meeting Location: Pine Hill Cemetery - 145 Court Street, Dover, NH
Meeting Date: **Tuesday, February 11, 2025**
Meeting Time: **5:30 pm**

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

Members Absent:

Alternate Members Present: Katie Smith

Alternate Members Absent:

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 September 19, 2024

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

Vote: U/a

3. Cemetery Staff Updates

During the month of January 2025, the Facilities, Grounds, and Cemeteries Division received 84 service requests, of which 73 were closed (completed), and 87 work orders, of which 74 were completed and closed.

There were 6 work orders pertaining to cemetery issues, 40 work orders pertaining to facility issues, 4 work orders pertaining to grounds issues, 23 work orders related to sign issues, 13 work orders related to traffic and street light issues, and 1 work order pertaining to tree issues.

Three full burials, and three ash internments were conducted in the Pine Hill Cemetery in January 2025. Two full graves and no cremation spaces were sold this month. Several foot-markers were installed before the winter frost set in too deep. Last week the city used the ground warmer for the first time in many years. This machine warms the ground so that a grave can be dug. The City of Dover conducts burials year-round. In recent years the city crew has been able to dig graves in winter by using jackhammers and construction saws in order to get through the top layer of frozen ground. However, this year the cold has been severe, and so the ground warmer was needed.

Facility, Grounds, and Cemetery crews were very busy helping with the Public Library. The library is temporarily moving day-to-day operations to the McConnell Center next door, while a remodel and addition construction project takes place at the library. Crews have spent over one hundred and thirty person-hours so far helping move items into storage, disposing of some items at the Solid Waste Center, building new shelving, and modifying existing shelving to make it mobile. Much of the library's art collection was moved into the art-safe storage room in the Facilities building at 145 Court St.



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Crews worked with the Streets and Parking Divisions to establish additional Winter Parking Ban areas. Parts of Nelson Street, parts of Cocheco Street, and parts of Nantucket Street got new signs to ban parking during the winter period of Dec 1 to April 1. This move is to allow plowing crews to clear streets more efficiently in areas where roads are narrower and vehicle owners tend to leave their cars on the street even when the city calls for an overnight parking ban.

Now that holiday season has ended, crews cut down and removed the City's holiday tree from Upper Henry Law Park, reinstalled the flagpole, and disconnected the holiday lights that are strung up through the downtown trees.

Motion: Belinda Labourdette moved to accept the staff updates

Second: Katie Smith seconded the motion

Vote: U/A

4. Unfinished Business

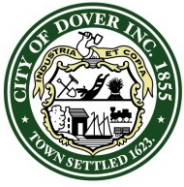
A. Green Burials - Review/Provide Recommendation's to City Council

Smith shared with us a document from the General Court of New Hampshire, New Hampshire Senate Bill 53-FN, "An act relative to natural organic reduction of human remains". The Analysis section of this document states: "This bill allows for the natural organic reduction of human remains and provides for regulation of the process". While this is not directly about green burials, it is a related topic. If we are to go ahead with offering green burials through the City of Dover, we will need to study how this relates.

We recognize the need to make a recommendation to the City Council about green burials, as the Council asked us to do in 2024. We discussed the issue of demand for green burials, the expense to the City, using fossil fuels to dig graves, the look of grave sites that are not being mowed. We discussed the option for citizens to be buried without a coffin and without the bottom of the vault (i.e., the body is touching the ground), which is currently available and supported by the Superintendent. We discussed the fact that any burial with a vault is problematic for green burial proponents. One member of the Board (Kelsch) would recommend that the City of Dover offers green burials using the same definition and the same maintenance strategies as the City of Lebanon. However, Kelsch recognizes that we do not have enough information concerning the cost to the city to recommend this at this time. None of the other members are ready to make a recommendation to offer green burials at this time.

Motion: Labourdette made the motion that the Cemetery Board recommends that the City Council not move forward with green burials until such a time as the Cemetery Board is provided with further guidance from the City Council. A summary of the considerations that would need to be addressed will follow in a letter from the Cemetery Board to the City Council, Beaudoin seconded.

Vote: U/A



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Katie Smith agreed to start a letter to the City Council, and Susan Kelsch will help with the first draft. We will officially work on the letter with the entire Cemetery Board in our April meeting. This letter will outline our major concerns, many which are noted above.

5. New Business

- A. Marggraf stated that he is resigning from the Cemetery Board, effective immediately. The board all thanked Rob for his many years of service (at least 18 years, he believes), and he noted that he enjoyed his time serving the city.
- B. Kelsch noted that the sign for the “Thomas Roberts (1600-1674) Cemetery” looks very nice and is much appreciated.
- C. Kelsch noted that she will miss the April 2025 and June 2025 meetings. Someone else will need to volunteer to write minutes.

6. Next Meeting Date

April 8, 2025

7. Adjournment

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

Vote: U/a

APPENDIX:

This is the text of the green burial resolution (approved by City Council) that we are working to meet:

“Within six months of the date of this resolution, the Dover Cemetery Board is requested and directed to review and provide written recommendations to City Council concerning whether and on what terms to allow the practice of green burials in City cemeteries and, if it were allowed, how the City’s regulations, bylaws, policies, and practices could or should be amended so as to best enable green burials.”

Please note this is partial text. The entire resolution is resolution number R – 2024.04.10 – 57.