

CITY OF DOVER

CEMETERY BOARD - MINUTES

Meeting Type: Regular Meeting
Meeting Location: Pine Hill Cemetery - 145 Court Street, Dover, NH
Meeting Date: **Tuesday, April 8, 2025**
Meeting Time: **5:30 pm**

Members Present: Cathy Beaudoin, Katie Smith

Members Absent Excused: Susan Kelsch

Members Absent Unexcused: Vice Chair Belinda Labourdette, Councilor Robbie Warach

Alternate Members Present: Mike Wilson, Jessica Lamontagne, Jamie Tynan

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 5:40 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes of February 11, 2025

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

Vote: U/a

3. Cemetery Staff Updates

FEBRUARY 2025

The Facilities, Grounds and Cemetery Division received 63 Service Requests of which 52 were closed, and 61 Work Orders of which 51 were completed and closed in the month of February.

There were six work orders pertaining to cemetery issues, nineteen work orders pertaining to facility issues, five work orders pertaining to grounds issues, twenty work orders related to sign issues, ten work orders related to traffic and street light issues and one work order pertaining to tree issues.

Three full burials, and two ash interments were conducted in the Pine Hill Cemetery this month. Ten full graves and two cremation spaces were sold this month.

The month of February was also a very busy one for crews helping out at the Public Library. The library is temporarily moving day-to-day operations to the McConnell Center next door, while a remodel and addition takes place at the library. Crews have spent an additional fifty person-hours this month helping move items into storage, disposing of some items at the Solid Waste Center, building some new shelving, and modifying existing shelving to make it mobile.

Crews worked with the Streets and Parking Divisions to establish an additional Winter Parking Ban area. Part of Mount Vernon Street got new signs to ban parking during the winter period of December 1st to April 1st. This move is to allow plowing crews to clear streets more efficiently in areas that roads are narrower and vehicle owners tend to leave their cars on the street even when the city calls for an overnight parking ban.

Crews were busy the month of February with storm related activities. Several crew members are part of the road plowing crew, and spent several days and nights plowing the city streets. The remaining



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crew members are responsible for clearing the public and employee access to several facilities around the city. The primary responsibilities are City Hall, the Transportation Center and the Indoor Pool. Once storms have cleared out and the primary locations have been addressed those same crew members then start the long and arduous process of clearing the remaining city building, like the Community Services building, the Veteran's Center and multiple buildings at the Pine Hill Cemetery. In addition to the buildings the paved roads all need to get plowed in the cemetery, as burials are conducted year-round.

The Division was able to purchase a new bucket-truck this month to replace the old one that had become an undependable safety concern. The bucket truck is used throughout the city to address tree safety concerns and also to address traffic lights and signage issues.

MARCH 2025

Crews were busy the month of March with late-season storm related activities. Several crew members are part of the road plowing crew, and spent several days and nights plowing the city streets. The remaining crew members are responsible for clearing the public and employee access to several facilities around the city. The primary responsibilities are City Hall, the Transportation Center and the Indoor Pool. Once storms have cleared out and the primary locations have been addressed those same crew members then start the long and arduous process of clearing the remaining city buildings, like the Community Services building, the Veteran's Center and multiple buildings at the Pine Hill Cemetery. In addition to the buildings the paved roads all need to get plowed in the cemetery, as burials are conducted year-round.

The Division was able to purchase a new bucket-truck last month to replace the old one that had become an undependable safety concern. The bucket truck is used throughout the city to address tree safety concerns and also to address traffic lights and signage issues. The new bucket truck was utilized this month at the Ice Arena to assist with lighting issues and started the task of alleviating the hazard of broken tree branches hanging over the road and sidewalks of the city.

4. Unfinished Business

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

Smith shared the first draft of the letter to the City Council that she and Sue Kelsch wrote to capture all major considerations regarding Green Burials. The Board has not heard an update on the status of our recommendation to City Council adopted in the February meeting.

Tymann suggested that the links in the letter be typed out, and Smith agreed to make the edits.

Lamontagne requested the Board keep discussing the topic and shared she may bring back legislation proposals related to green burials to the NH House in the fall session. Beaudoin and



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Smith proposed the Board wait to hear back from the City Council after sharing the updated letter, as the Board needs additional direction and/or support given the many complex considerations related to the topic.

5. New Business

A. Group 26 - Interfaith Jewish Section

Colonna asked the Board for input on a current request. A Jewish couple wants to be buried in the Temple Israel section of the cemetery but they are not currently members of Temple Israel. Temple Israel proposed that the couple would need to purchase the graves for \$5500 (significantly more than current public price), which they calculated based on three years of member dues (existing Temple Israel members receive a grave for free). Temple Israel currently owns two rows of lots and may buy more in the future (two adjoining rows are open). No formal reservation has been placed with the Cemetery but the Rabbi has blessed the area. Note that grave “resales” can happen but typically it only occurs when someone wants to sell a grave back to the cemetery. Colonna and Bretz shared maps of the Temple Israel block and adjacent rows to help the Board visualize the request.

Colonna is waiting to hear back from Temple Israel on if they want to purchase the next row and if they have any other feedback or questions on the situation. The current recommendation is to sell the couple two graves one or two rows removed from the Temple Israel future block. The Board agrees with the proposed approach.

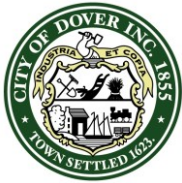
6. Next Meeting Date

June 10, 2025

7. Adjournment

Motion: Lamontagne made the motion to adjourn at 6:21 p.m., Smith seconded.

Vote: U/a



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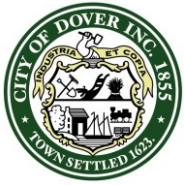
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A Summary of Considerations and Concerns Regarding Green Burials

The Dover Cemetery Board unanimously approved a motion during the February 11, 2025 meeting to recommend that Dover does not move forward with green burials at this time. After months of discussion and research, the Board has identified several key considerations and concerns that would need to be addressed with further guidance from the City Council if green burial is to be considered in the future.

- **Lack of standard definitions:** while there are a few national¹ and local² nonprofit groups, there are not consistent guidelines, definitions, and approaches broadly adopted by municipal cemeteries in NH.
- **Potential impact of pending state legislation:** The City of Lebanon, NH, has proven that green (“natural”) burials, according to Lebanon’s definition, are legal under current state law. However, the Board is aware of at least two recent or current state legislation items related to the topic of green alternatives to traditional burial. If any statewide guidelines are established, this could help address the above consideration on standard definitions.
 - New Hampshire House Bill 1324³ (introduced on Dec. 6, 2023; died in chamber)
 - New Hampshire Senate Bill 53-FN⁴ (Introduced on Jan. 10, 2025; rereferred to Senate Judiciary Committee after March 6 voice vote)
- **Unclear level of demand:** while there is clear interest in green burials from local advocates, the Board did not find evidence of significant demand for this service from the citizens of Dover (no known inquiries to the Cemetery staff, and limited inquiries known by Board members who work in the funeral industry). Given the cost required to create and maintain the new service, the Board would want additional data to understand potential demand in Dover.
- **Legal Issues:** a new set of guidelines and contract terms would need to be created for this new service and would require support from the City’s legal team. (City of Lebanon, NH⁵ gives us a template to work from.)
- **Maintenance:** green burials would have a unique set of maintenance requirements that would add complexity and cost to the Cemetery staff’s mandate (for example, addressing sinking ground and collapse issues)
- **Cost:** addressing the above considerations would require an initial investment of City resources, and there could be additional ongoing costs to maintain a separate green burial area (this could be offset by higher burial rates)
- **Role of funeral homes:** need to define the funeral home’s responsibility in a green burial. This includes a Plan B if the citizen does not hold up her/his end of the contract.



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- **City employees:** what City employees will be expected to do or not do in a green burial.
Discuss with employee union.

- 1 <https://www.greenburialcouncil.org/>
- 2 <https://www.lotusandlavenderburial.org/>
- 3 <https://legiscan.com/NH/bill/HB1324/2024>
- 4 https://gc.nh.gov/lsr_search/billtext.aspx?id=1055&type=3
- 5 <https://lebanonnh.gov/1804/Natural-Burials>