



CITY OF DOVER

CEMETERY BOARD - MINUTES

Meeting Type: Regular Meeting
Meeting Location: Pine Hill Cemetery - 145 Court Street, Dover, NH
Meeting Date: **Tuesday, September 9, 2025**
Meeting Time: **5:30 pm**

Members Present: Vice Chair Belinda Labourdette, Susan Kelsch - Secretary, Cathy Beaudoin, Katie Smith, Jessica Lamontagne, Councilor Robbie Warach

Alternate Members Present: Jamie Tynan

Alternate Members Excused Absent: Mike Wilson

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 5:36 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes of April 9, 2025

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

Vote: U/A

3. Cemetery Staff Updates

May 2025:

Facilities, Grounds, and Cemetery Division received 108 service requests, of which 86 were closed, and 126 work orders, of which 97 were completed and closed in the month of May.

There were 24 work orders pertaining cemetery issues, 44 work orders pertaining to facility issues, 15 work orders pertaining to grounds issues, 11 work orders related to sign issues, 13 work orders related to traffic and street light issues, 5 work orders related to recreation, 2 reports of graffiti, and 12 work orders pertaining to tree issues.

Three full burials, 6 ash burials, and 3 columbarium niche interments were conducted in the Pine Hill Cemetery this month. Eight full graves and zero cremation spaces were sold this month.

Crews started the spring installation of foot markers. These are individual flat rectangular stones that get installed at the foot of a grave with the deceased person's name, birth date, and date of death. One of the benefits of prior military service is that the Veteran's Administration provides a no-cost foot marker for veterans. In addition to the normal engraving, they also include the veteran's branch of service and rank.

During the month of May there is a very concerted effort to make the Pine Hill Cemetery presentable for the Memorial Day Holiday weekend. The time of year for this holiday coincides with one of the best growing seasons for grass. Because of this our crew spends every day, evening, and a couple of Saturdays moving and weed-whacking all areas of the cemetery. We also get assistance in the evenings and on Saturdays from the other divisions of Community Service. Once the entire cemetery is gone through, they go right back to where they started. This process happens four to six times leading up to the holiday weekend.



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On the Thursday afternoon before the holiday a volunteer group, led by the American Legion, places American flags on hundreds of veteran's graves throughout the cemetery. In addition to that there is a ceremony at the Veteran's Circle at Pine Hill Cemetery on the Monday holiday orchestrated by the Woodman Museum and includes guest speakers.

June 2025:

The Facilities, Grounds, and Cemetery Division received 142 service requests, of which 129 were closed, and 151 work orders, of which 139 were completed and closed in the month of June.

There were 12 work orders pertaining to cemetery issues, 34 work orders pertaining to facility issues, 18 work orders pertaining to grounds issues, 23 work orders related to sign issues, 19 work orders related to traffic and street light issues, 27 work orders related to recreation, 1 report of graffiti, and 17 work orders pertaining to tree issues.

Five full burials, 9 ash burials, and 1 columbarium niche interment were conducted in the Pine Hill Cemetery this month. Ten full graves, 3 cremation graves, and 1 columbarium niche were sold this month.

Some other items taken care of around town: a new sign was installed in the historic Pinkham Cemetery on Dover Pt Rd.

July 2025:

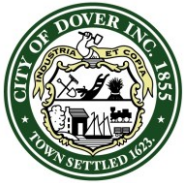
The Facilities, Grounds and Cemetery Division received 107 Service Requests, of which 98 were closed, and 120 Work Orders, of which 107 were completed and closed in the month of July.

There were 13 work orders pertaining to cemetery issues, 34 work orders pertaining to facility issues, 18 work orders pertaining to grounds issues, 20 work orders related to sign issues, 5 work orders related to traffic and street light issues, 20 work orders related to recreation, 2 reports of graffiti, and 17 work orders pertaining to tree issues.

Two full burials, 5 ash burials, and no columbarium interments were conducted in the Pine Hill Cemetery this month. Five full graves, no cremation graves, and no columbarium niches were sold this month.

Motion: Beaudoin made the motion to accept the staff updates, Smith seconded.

Vote: U/A



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4. Unfinished Business

A. Green Burials

We discussed if the letter outlining concerns related to Green Burials has been sent to the City Council. Nothing has been sent to the City Council as far as we know. The section “A Summary of Considerations and Concerns Regarding Green Burials” in the April 2025 meeting minutes is the text we want to send them. Jennifer Bretz will forward to the City Manager.

B. Burials in Jewish Section:

This was discussed in the April 2025 meeting. The 2 graves near the Temple Israel section were sold, as discussed in the April 2025 meeting. In fact the City has mapped a few more graves in the same area (group 26) in case this happens again. This matter is settled.

5. New Business

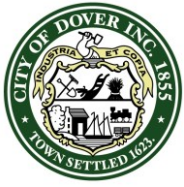
A. Ground Penetrating Radar of Thomas Roberts (1600-1674) Cemetery

Diane Fiske, First Parish Church historian, is working with folks from UNH and an independent company to conduct a study of the Thomas Roberts (1600-1674) Cemetery using ground-penetrating radar. Free of charge to the city, they will provide us the findings. This will tell us what is buried in that space. Superintendent Colonna approved the request to do this. The Daughters of the American Revolution are also involved. The radar should not disturb the ground in any way, it is done by sweeping the machinery over the ground. One neighbor complained about the potential for tearing up the cemetery ground and creating an environmental hazard. However, the ground will not be disturbed by this, so her fears are unfounded. The Board asked that we be informed when the radar happens, some members may want to go watch. Colonna agreed to alert us when it is happening. The first meeting with Fiske will be at the cemetery on Sept 11.

A resident of Court Street, who often volunteers to do clean-up in Pine Hill Cemetery, recently asked if there were records of who is buried in the Unknown grave, near section 24. Colonna reports that we have very few records on this subject. We know of two persons who were hit by a train more than a hundred years ago who are buried there. Colonna asked, and the same company has agreed to do the ground-penetrating radar on the Unknown section as well. All this is expected to happen in September.

B. Green Burial Discussion at Dover Public Library

Dover Public Library hosted a forum on death doulas and natural burials on Sep 8. Susan Kelsch attended. She counted 22 other attendees. The presenter was Sarah Arslanian from Lotus and Lavender Burial, a non-profit that is trying to raise funds in order to start a green burial cemetery in the seacoast area. She did not address Dover municipal cemeteries in this discussion.



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C. Election of Officers

After some discussion, we agreed to the following new roles for the Cemetery Board.
Thank you to everyone who agreed to serve.

Chair: Susan Kelsch

Vice-Chair: Katie Smith

Secretary: Jessica LaMontagne

Motion: Beaudoin made a motion to accept the new Cemetery Board officers, Lamontagne seconded.

Vote: U/A

D. Space for Scattering of Ashes

Nymann proposed the idea of having a designated space in a municipal cemetery for scattering ashes. He has been doing some research with the New Hampshire Cemetery Association and some towns around New Hampshire about how to handle ashes in a cemetery. For scattering of ashes, the cemetery could devote more of a garden-like space, mowed less often, and with more planted or wild flowers than we usually see in the Dover City cemeteries. It could be tended by volunteers from the public, working under guidance from the city. Or it could be a space that is purchased and maintained by the family of the deceased. We talked briefly about the idea. Nothing decided at this point, but we agreed to put it on the agenda for the December meeting.

E. Stories from the Cemetery, Woodman Museum

The Woodman Museum is not using Pine Hill Cemetery for its annual fund-raising event this year. They are doing the event within their buildings. "Night at the Museum".

6. Next Meeting Date

December 9, 2025

7. Adjournment

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

Vote: U/a