



**CITY OF PORTSMOUTH
AFRICAN BURYING GROUND MEMORIAL PARK COMMITTEE**

Monday, November 17, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.

City Hall Complex, Conference Room A
1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth, NH 03801

Members of the public also have the option to join the meeting over Zoom.
(*See below for more details)

AGENDA

1. Call to order / roll call
2. Review and approve draft minutes of the April 21, 2025 meeting
3. (there was no quorum for action at the scheduled meeting of 10-20-25)
4. Langdon Farm Burying Ground
5. Curation alternatives
 - Summarize steps explored: Dyckman Farmhouse Museum Alliance; Strawberry Banke; Protocols; Public Library
6. Review draft report to the City Council
7. Schedule next meeting
8. Other business, if any
9. Public comment
10. Adjournment

***Zoom information:**

When: November 17, 2025 04:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/pR4JuCo5Rga0ZTnXn0eNgg>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.



CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE
AFRICAN BURYING GROUND MEMORIAL PARK COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, April 21, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.
City Hall Complex - Conference Room A
1 Junkins Avenue
Portsmouth, NH 03801

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call:** The meeting was called to order at 4:03 p.m.

Members present: Assistant Mayor JoAnna Kelley (Chair); Dierdre Forte (Forte), Co-Chair - Portsmouth Cemetery Committee; Jill Minot-Seabrook (Seabrook), Seacoast African American Cultural Center; Dariya Steele (Steele), Black Heritage Trail New Hampshire; Dzifa (Joyce) Patterson (Patterson), Seacoast African American Cultural Center; Jason Green (Green), Black Lives Matter New Hampshire; Ron Baisden (Baisden); Rev. Robert Thompson (Thompson), Seacoast NAACP

Members present via Zoom: Gina Bowker (Bowker), Black Heritage Trail NH

Staff present: Suzanne M. Woodland, Deputy City Manager and Regulatory Counsel (DCM) and Corin Hallowell (Hallowell), Parks and Greeneries Foreman.

Guests: Dr. Kathleen Wheeler, Head Archeologist at African Burying Ground Memorial Park; Chris Dwyer, Portsmouth Public Art Committee
2. **Review and approval of draft minutes of the March 3, 2025 meeting:** Ron Baisden moved to accept the minutes of the March 3, 2025 meeting. Dee Forte seconded the motion. All in favor. The motion was approved.
3. **Mission Statement / Committee Name:** The Committee came to a consensus as to the mission statement at the last meeting and as there was no further discussion regarding changing the name of the Committee, this item was tabled at this time.
4. **Scheduling Community Engagement Meeting:** DCM stated she was in contact with Megan Howey and Amy Michaels at UNH and due to time constraints, they will contact the Committee once they have some dates and options.
5. **Presentation by Kathleen Wheeler regarding Reburial of Ancestors in 2014:** Wheeler gave a presentation on the history of the burying ground, the care and dedication of the reburial of the remains and the ancestors that were found. Dr. Wheeler would like to reignite telling this story to remind people of what happened on Chestnut Street.
6. **Curation:** DCM stated that she, the Chair and Wheeler spoke about accepting Wheeler's offer to continue to maintain the remains for a period of time and to formally document the offer. DCM offered to draft an agreement to preserve the status quo and present it to the Committee.

7. **Dinah Chase Whipple monument installation – June 13, 2025 at 1:00 p.m.:**

The event will take place at North Cemetery and the Committee, along with the family, are working on a list of speakers to speak at the event. The information will be distributed to local organizations, included in the City newsletter and via social media.

8. **Other scheduled events:**

- a. Dariya Stelle of the Black Heritage Trail gave information leading up to Juneteenth and the tenth anniversary of the African Burying Ground Memorial Park.
- b. Dzifa Patterson of SAACC informed the Committee of the march across the bridge and SAACC that will be celebrating its 25th anniversary.

9. **Other Business:** Hallowell informed the Committee that he has the tiles for the Sankofa and the tile person will be installing the new tiles on May 12, 2025. The week of May 26, 2025, the following work will be done by Daedalus: rewaxing of the bronze structures, refinishing of the metal sculptures, recoating the pedestal and paint in the letters in the ribbon and on the Court Street side. The waterline project should be completed within the next few weeks.

10. **Public Comment:** Dwyer advised that the faded and cracked tiles in the fence should be replaced and that she has the pattern and the tiles. Hallowell with speak with Daedalus.

11. **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 4:37 p.m.

The next meeting of the African Burying Ground Memorial Park Committee will be held in Conference Room A at Portsmouth City Hall on Monday, May 19, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.

This meeting was later cancelled on May 19, 2025 and rescheduled to June 23, 2025.

Meeting Minutes prepared by:
Barbara Zulkiewicz

Minutes approved:

African Burying Ground Memorial Park Stewardship Committee

Committee Recommendations

Adopted by the Committee –INSERT DATE

In January 2024, the City Council established the Mayor’s Blue Ribbon African Burying Ground Memorial Park Stewardship Committee, (the “African Burying Ground Committee”). The current African Burying Ground Committee is a later iteration of the African Burying Ground Committee first established in 2004 following the discovery of the burial site on Chestnut Street.

Over the last 20 years, the purposes and work of the African Burying Ground Committee have evolved and changed depending on the tasks presented, e.g., memorial design, fund raising, construction and reinterment of remains etc. Looking forward, the African Burying Ground Committee has considered and discussed its mission and recommends the following to the incoming 2026-2027 City Council.

Reestablish the African Burying Ground Committee in 2026 with a new name and reconsidered mission:

The Committee is dedicated to preserving and honoring the final resting places of peoples of African descent, enslaved, formerly enslaved and free. We strive to safeguard these sacred sites through respectful stewardship, community engagement, and educational initiatives. We recognize the profound historical and cultural significance of these hallowed grounds and will ensure they are protected for future generations. Given our shared and overlapping interest in maintaining, preserving and honoring the sites and the artistic and cultural elements within them, we anticipate close coordination with and benefit from the resources and expertise of the City’s Department of Public Works, the Public Art Review Committee, and the Cemetery Committee.

One of the driving factors behind the proposed change to the mission is that there are multiple burial sites in Portsmouth with the remains of peoples of African descent. The African Burying Ground Committee has been receiving updates from City staff regarding steps that will be taken to protect the African Burying Ground on Langdon Farm on Lafayette Road. Another factor is the robustness of the Public Art Review Committee and the Cemetery Committee. Chris Dwyer of the Public Art Review Committee, Susan Sterry of the Cemetery Committee and Corin Hallowell of the Public Works Department worked diligently to provide guidance on the maintenance of the art elements at Memorial Park on Chestnut Street. The African Burying Ground Committee’s efforts do not need to be narrowly focused on maintaining the Memorial Park given these other resources.

Considering the recommended updates to the mission, a slight change to the African Burying Ground Committee's name is in order. The proposed "African Burying Grounds Preservation Committee" is close enough to the prior committee's name to flag it as a successor committee but encompasses the broader mission.

The African Burying Ground Committee recommends that membership continue in the same form. The current membership structure brings the necessary, valuable voices of the descendant community to the table as members regardless of Portsmouth residency. The current makeup of the committee includes a representative from each of the following organizations:

Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire Representative

Seacoast African American Cultural Center Representative

NAACP Representative

Black Lives Matter Seacoast Representative A representative of the Cemetery Committee

2 Portsmouth Residents – Ron Baisden is currently serving, and we hope he will continue to serve. There is one vacancy.