

**CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE
CEMETERY COMMITTEE**



**MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, JUNE 4, 2026, 4 pm
City Hall Conference Room A
1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth NH 03801**

For the Zoom recording:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/7CBD4sNhfYE?si=WpGYT-4eie1kV2ob>

Call to order and Roll Call: Chair Dee Dee Forte, Celeste Brooks, Bridget Brady, Steve Buzzell, Jennifer Merriam, Peter Splaine, Amy Dutton, Michael Griffin, Sue Polidura, Tara Rix. Excused: Amy Dutton, Michael Griffin. Staff: Peter Rice, Corin Hallowell, Stephanie Seacord. Guest, FOSE President Kyle LaChance.

1. Approve May 7 meeting minutes – On a motion by Brooks, seconded by Merriam, the committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes.
2. Point of Graves Wall – DPW Director Peter Rice presented two options for proposed designs and plans for replacing the damaged wall around the burial ground. Option B, recommended, designed by Terrence Parker, Terraforma Landscape is a buttress-shaped wall with flat stone faces and a cap, wrapping around the cemetery along the Mechanic Street and Peirce Island Road sides. The project includes a wood fence to replace the City-owned fence at the back of the property, separating the cemetery from residential property.
 - The design includes a pedestrian opening in the wall on the Mechanic Street side so visitors can transit the property and enter/exit through the iron turnstile gate which is being restored.
 - A sidewalk out-board of the wall on the Mechanic Street side and a reoriented crosswalk are planned as the Mechanic Street Pump Station project progresses.
 - None of the work impinges on the cemetery and a State archaeologist will observe the construction as required for any work within 25-feet of a cemetery.
 - Director Rice reported that because a generous donor from Friends of the South End has stepped forward to fund \$230,750 of the estimated \$430,000 project and the City has \$155,000 accrued for Historic Cemeteries in the Capital Improvement Plan, plus an additional \$50,000 in Parks & Monuments funds. The City would like to move the project from FY28 to FY 27. The replacement wall work would start in the summer of 2026, recognizing that shoreline DES permitting may delay the work until

Fall 2026. Additional costs may include flagger details for work impacting roadways, repaving, airspade and infrastructure work such as rehangng gates – much of which can be handled by DPW staff.

- Polidura and FOSE President Lachance asked if Moose Plate or LCHIP grants might be used but Director Rice explained that because the wall has failed and a donor has stepped forward, that the City prefers to move ahead with the funds in hand rather than potentially delaying the project with the time a grant process usually takes.
- Rix asked if the wall design recreates the original. Hallowell explained that as many as four different walls, including brick, existed previously. Director Rice said the City believes that originally there was no wall, just grass and a dirt path.
- Buzzell and Splaine asked if the expense will exhaust Cemetery Committee funds for repairs, cleaning etc. and Hallowell replied that those expenses are covered by his operating budget.

On a motion by Splaine, seconded by Brooks, the Committee voted to accept the proposal as presented for the City to replace the Point of Graves Burial Ground wall. Attending FOSE members expressed their thanks and appreciation.

3. American Revolution soldier gravesites – Polidura presented her list of 40 individuals listed by Sons of American Revolution (SAR) whose graves are located in North Cemetery. She has an additional list of 40 names of those with connections to the Revolution defined by SAR in the category “Patriot Service.” The highlighted names are those who participated in the raid on Ft. William and Mary. Michael Griffin The Committee discussed several ideas for sharing the information:
 - Posting the PDF with Polidura’s research on a new American Revolution webpage linked from the Historic Cemeteries page.
 - Flagging the gravesites with temporary markers using a material resembling old American flags. As this work is at the discretion of the Committee and Hallowell, Polidura and Forte will schedule a work party and invite the Committee to undertake that task and identify the gravesites with GPS and Seacord will work with Jeff Boucher and the DPW sign shop (who created the “rules and guidelines” signage in the cemeteries) to create temporary signage that explains what the markers signify, to guide the public.
 - Rix suggested creating a self-guided walking tour using the GPS coordinates. Seacord will work with DPW GIS Jamie McCarthy to identify gravesites on a Google map. A QR code on the temporary sign will direct people to the map.
 - Polidura offered to give guided tours of the sites on Saturdays in July. Forte volunteered to assist.
4. Revised Historic Cemeteries rack card – Seacord reviewed the new design elements suggested by Rix. The Committee responded favorably to the revisions, suggesting a comma between Portsmouth and NH at the top, and identifying the people in the cameos, perhaps with names under the images. Seacord will review a revised version with the Committee at their next meeting.
5. Woodbury Langdon plaque – Forte and Hallowell reported that DPW’s Boucher has affixed the plaque with epoxied studs on the back so the plaque ‘floats’ on the wall. Forte will take a photograph to send to the DAR and discuss date options for a dedication event.

6. 250th Commemorations – Forte noted that the City has created a Portsmouth 250 webpage, linked from the PortsmouthNH.gov homepage. Seacord explained that the page includes descriptions of major commemorative events in Portsmouth this summer and links to the three key calendar pages created for the 250:

- NH Commission link: [New Hampshire 250 | Join the Celebration Today](#)
- VisitNH 205 link: [Visit NH 250th Anniversary | Visit NH 250th Anniversary](#)
- Polidura discussed the idea of a reading of the Declaration, which usually takes place in Market Square on July 4, which she suggested might be scheduled this year for July 18 – the date the Declaration was actually read in 1776. The date coincides with a Pro Portsmouth Summer in the Streets concert, 5:30-8:30 pm and the Committee suggested the reading might take place right after set-up and street closure between 4:30 and 5 pm to take advantage of the gathering concert audience.
- Polidura wondered if the Portsmouth Athenaeum might be planning an event.

7. Other business

- Buzzell offered a ‘shout out’ to the Liberty Mutual work crew who worked tirelessly, in pouring rain, to clear out the corner of North Cemetery and other tasks. He wondered if funds were available to purchase small tokens of appreciation to give to them and other volunteers. The Committee discussed ideas including buttons (Brooks has a machine and would just need materials), stickers, coffee mugs, t-shirts. The Committee will research ideas for the next meeting.
- Polidura asked Hallowell if the City might purchase a “Betsy Ross” 1776-2026 250th flag to fly on the flagpole in North Cemetery in honor of William Whipple. Hallowell said a 3x5 ft. flag would be best for that flagpole and will investigate with High Flyin’ Flag in Greenland.
- Buzzell asked if anyone had attended the Langdon Cemetery site walk and Forte reported that PHA and the contractor have now extended the 50-ft radius “do not disturb” protection area from the point of gravesites identified by LIDAR outside the cemetery perimeter wall. Excavations will be observed by an authorized State supervisor.

9. Public comment -- None

10. On a motion by Brooks seconded by Splaine, the meeting adjourned at 4:57 pm.

Next meeting: July 1, 2026