

NANTUCKET CEMETERY COMMISSION
Posted Meeting of May 27, 2026, at 3:00 pm
DPW Conference Room, 188 Madaket Road, with Zoom Connectivity

MAY FINAL AND APPROVED MINUTES

Attendance, by Roll Call: Commissioners: Jascin Finger, Frances Karttunen, Scott McIver, Allen Reinhard, and Lee Saperstein (3:15 pm); Charlie Polachi, Cemetery Administrator. It was determined by roll call that there was a quorum at all times; for reference, the correct Zoom link to join Cemetery Commission meetings is

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86337037514?pwd=cUTROpCbZz4jjEqvO1G73lvsqWgQxE.1>

Meeting ID: 863 3703 7514

Passcode: 983505

1. Call to Order.

Allen Reinhard called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm; a roll call established the listed attendance. The link to the video recording is

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1XLj4BgMWl0&list=PL49sKqpy7VAhlyX1ozdd1bZ3zV8kXFp8M&index=70>.

2. Public and Commissioners' Comments.

To begin, Frances Karttunen asked if she might relate the reception received by the video film of Nantucket's Historic Coloured Cemetery in Helsinki. When unanimous consent was given, she said that it was excellent. Her attendance at the Maple Leaf and Eagle Conference was the reason for the delay in this month's meeting. She said that there was an enthusiastic response from a nearly filled room. The next presentation will be on Juneteenth (June 19) at the Roxbury International Film Festival.

For the dedication of the monument to Absalom and Hannah Boston that will occur on the morning of Juneteenth, she has lined up three of the speakers from the video and hopes for a few other speakers. She is also working on a musical interlude. The presentation begins at 9:00 am and will last for 45 minutes. Attached is a press release approved by the Commission for the monument and the dedication event.

3. Minutes of April 8, 2026.

Allen Reinhard asked for approval of the minutes of April 8, 2026; Scott McIver made that motion and Jascin Finger seconded it; it was approved unanimously by roll-call vote (Frances Karttunen, aye; Allen Reinhard, aye; Jascin Finger, aye; Scott McIver, aye).

4. A plan for dedication of the new stone for Absalom Boston in the Historic Coloured Cemetery on June 19, Juneteenth at 9 a.m. Potential speakers, program, parking, publicity, cemetery entrance.

This item was covered in Frances Karttunen's comments. Scott McIver asked where the monument should go. The Boston family does have a plot but its corners are not marked on the ground. Frances Karttunen suggested that she and Scott McIver would work out the best spot. She said that she would send out a reminder press release closer to the date with final program details, parking, and location directions.

5. Polpis Cemetery; Update on New Corner Markers.

Scott McIver and Allen Reinhard said that they had all the necessary parts for the Polpis corner markers and would meet at Polpis on Tuesday, June 2nd at 9:00 am to emplace them. Lee Saperstein entered the room at 3:15 pm. Apparently a house move blocked all ways to the Madaket Road,

Frances Karttunen reported that the Red Maple that had been planted at the top of the hill at Polpis had suffered through the winter from deer but had survived and was growing. A family with a nearby plot has volunteered to look after it.

6. Monument Restoration Project Update.

As written last month, Ludlow Memorial, LMC, continues to await warmer weather before working on the monuments in New North Cemetery. Some of the chemicals that they use to restore broken stones need to be in an atmosphere warmer than a daily average of 50 degrees. Frances Karttunen remarked that she had seen where the monument to Lucy Cooper in the Historic Coloured Cemetery had been repaired.

7. Newtown Cemetery: Progress Update.

Article 81 at the recent Annual Town Meeting passed on the Consent Agenda, which means that the Town is authorized to take 46 Sparks Avenue for cemetery purposes. Lee Saperstein asked if we could determine the status of 40, 42, and 44 Sparks that may have been taken in 1998 to develop Cow Pond Lane. [Action: Consult with Real Estate Specialists on next steps for Newtown.].

Allen Reinhard suggested that Newtown could be our next big project: clearing and grubbing, GPR survey. layouts, and hardscaping. Lee Saperstein remembered that there was an early consultant's report on Newtown and, while out of day, might provide good background. Charlie Polacchi will look for it in the files.

8. Thoughts on Commission Future.

It was noted that the Select Board would listen that evening to potential committee members. Lee Saperstein reported that there was one applicant for the Cemetery Commission. With only one vacancy that person is a shoe in.

Allen Reinhard suggested that we think about candidates for officers. Several noted that elections will happen in July and that we still have a meeting in June with the current membership.

8. Old, New, Other Business, and Final Comments.

Other than recapping earlier conversations, there were no final comments and the meeting was ready for adjournment.

9. Adjournment.

Adjournment was by acclamation at 3:35 pm.

Next regular meeting: Wednesday, June 10, 2026, at 3:00 pm, in the DPW conference room at 188 Madaket Road and by Zoom.

Nantucket Cemetery Projects List:

- Consolidation of lots at Newtown Cemetery: Agenda item 6 above for progress.
- New North Cemetery Monument Restoration Project, progress and next steps.
- Installation of new Corner Markers for new lots at Polpis Cemetery and updated map when completed.

Respectfully submitted: Lee W. Saperstein, Secretary; Date: 06/06/2026

PRESS RELEASE
MAY 29, 2026

NANTUCKET DOCUMENTARY FILM FINDS INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES

"Nantucket's Historic Coloured Cemetery: Stories Told by Nantucketers," a documentary film by the Nantucket Cemetery Commission, has gone international. On May 20 it was screened at the Maple Leaf and Eagle North American Studies Conference in Helsinki, Finland, and on June 19 it will be on the program of the Roxbury International Film Festival. Executive producers Frances Karttunen and Barbara Ann White and Mark White, who served as coach for the narrators of the film, accompanied the documentary to Finland and will be on hand for its screening in Boston.

The film's premiere took place on May 3, 2025, at the Dreamland Theatre, where it was also shown in October 2025. Since its initial showing to a sell-out audience in the Dreamland's main theater, the film has been shown at the Nantucket Atheneum, the Nantucket Whaling Museum, the Saltmarsh Senior Center, Our Island Home, and Cyrus Peirce Middle School. Another screening at the Saltmarsh is planned for July or August 2026.

Twenty-one Nantucketers take turns telling stories about the people interred in the cemetery that dates to at least 1798. Of the narrators, twenty are local people of color with ages ranging from ten years old to ninety. The subjects of the stories are veterans, whalers, clergymen, entrepreneurs, refugees from enslavement, abolitionists, and people who successfully fought for the desegregation of the Nantucket Public Schools in the 1840s.

The screening in Boston in the evening of Juneteenth will be dedicated to the memory of Edmund "Rookie" Ramos, the second narrator in the film, who passed away on February 6, 2026.

In conjunction with the 2026 international screenings, the Nantucket Cemetery Commission will hold a public event in the Historic Coloured Cemetery on Friday, June 19, at 9 am. Early in the film, narrator Nolan Absalom Leonardo Finger poses the question of why there is no headstone for Nantucket's Black whaling master Absalom F. Boston despite ones for his first two wives and several of his children. Visitors to the cemetery are disappointed not to find a headstone for such a famous Black Nantucketer. There is no headstone for Absalom Boston's third wife, Hannah Cook Boston, either. The Cemetery Commission has commissioned a monument for Absalom Boston and Hannah Cook Boston and will inaugurate it with a morning ceremony at which narrators will reprise the stories about the Boston family that they tell in the film.

The documentary film is a project of the Town of Nantucket Cemetery Commission funded by Nantucket Offshore Wind Community Fund at the Community Foundation for Nantucket with additional support from the estate of Alfred W. Crosby.

Here is a link to the film:

https://youtu.be/V_CnMPK655k