

DIVISION OF CEMETERIES

STATE OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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CEMETERY BOARD
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CHAIR

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ATTORNEY GENERAL

JAMES V. McDONALD, M.D., M.P.H.
COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH

DRAFT

Cemetery Board Minutes May 8, 2024

**Crowne Plaza Albany – The Desmond
660 Albany Shaker Rd., Albany, NY 12211**

**Office of the New York Attorney General 44 South Broadway
White Plains, New York 10601**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mark Pattison, Department of State, Chair
Jill Faber, Office of the New York State Attorney General

Thomas Fuller, Department of Health

OTHER ATTENDEES:

Emmanuel Blugh, Division of Cemeteries
Michael Catena, Division of Cemeteries
Kerry Forezzi, Division of Cemeteries
Michael Morris, Department of State
Natesha Salmon, Division of Cemeteries
Robert Vanderbles, Department of State

Leonard Breen, Division of Cemeteries
Brendan Dunn, Division of Cemeteries
Nathan McCarthy, Division of Cemeteries
Lewis Polishook, Division of Cemeteries
Michael Seelman, Division of Cemeteries
Alicia Young, Division of Cemeteries

GUESTS:

Lisa Albert, Green-Wood Cemetery
Alex Buchholz, PKF O'Connor Davies, LLP
Joe David, Acacia Park Cemetery
Richard Freiman, Richard Freiman & Associates, PLLC
Jay Ivler, Mount Lebanon Cemetery
Bill Lane, Greenwood Union Cemetery
Charles Orlando, White Haven Memorial Park
Jeffrey Reed, Mount Calvary Cemetery
Nate Romagnola, White Haven Memorial Park
Sara Surkues, Green-Wood Cemetery
Cathy Vail, Holy Sepulchre Cemetery
Dennis Werner, St. Michael's Cemetery

Brendan Boyle, FCM & NYSAC
Tom Christy, Buffalo Catholic Cemeteries
David Fleming Jr., FCM & NYSAC
Rosaria Gomez, St. Michael's Cemetery
Katie LaBella, St. Michael's Cemetery
Richard Moylan, Green-Wood Cemetery
Matt Parisi, Kensico Cemetery
William J Riley, St. Raymond's Cemetery
Chris Ross, Oakwood Cemetery
Janet Talbett, Whitesville Rural Cemetery
Doug Wasiura, Mount Calvary Cemetery
Dennis Wiese, Raymond Hill Cemetery

Some "guests" attended solely via WebEx phone call-in; their names may not be listed above.



**Department
of State**

Opening Remarks

Chairman Mark Pattison called the meeting to order at 10:18 a.m. Mr. Pattison introduced himself and had the other Board members introduce themselves. Mr. Pattison thanked the Division for its successful efforts this year in formalizing our processes and providing education and assistance opportunities for cemeteries across the State. Mr. Pattison thanked NYSAC for its cooperation and assistance throughout the year.

24-05-A-24 – Minutes of Previous Meetings

A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously adopted approving the minutes of the May meetings.

24-05-B-25 – Legislation and Regulation

1. Pending Legislation

Robert Vanderbles referred the Board to the legislative update he prepared.

2. Regulations

Mr. Vanderbles relayed that he and the Division continue to assess the public comments received on proposed regulations for natural organic reduction.

24-05-C-26 – Division Report

Director Lewis Polishook highlighted some aspects of the extensive Division report published for this board meeting. Mr. Polishook thanked the Division, particularly Cindi Craig and Kerry Forezzi in their efforts to extend our Cemetery 101 sessions across the state and the offering of training for completing the annual financial report form. Mr. Polishook also asked the community for their assistance in finding new locations for upcoming Cemetery 101 sessions.

Director Polishook thanked Division Senior Accountant Lisa Dooley for her contributions towards our “Clean Up Your Cemetery Day” pilot program. The event was well received, and we are looking for feedback helping us expand the program in 2025.

Director Polishook reviewed staffing at the division. Vacant positions currently include one accountant and one investigator. Mr. Polishook also thanked prior investigator Brendon Stanton for his assistance in developing our IT infrastructure in previous and upcoming years. Mr. Polishook also highlighted two positions which will soon be added to the Division’s staff.

Assistant Director Alicia Young provided an update on our progress receiving annual reports from regulated cemeteries. Approximately 48% of the annual reports we have received so far were submitted online.

Director Polishook referred the Board to the Division’s annual abandonment report. Mr. Polishook added a description of the status of Central Nassau Cemetery, which we are still reviewing to determine if it is considered abandoned.

24-05-D-27 - Vandalism, Abandonment and Monument Repair or Removal Fund Report

Assistant Director Alicia Young confirmed that \$2M has been appropriated for our 2024 vandalism and monument repair fund. We were able to distribute approximately \$1.7M throughout the 2023 fiscal year and allocated greater than the \$2M allotment.

There are six applications for funds from the vandalism fund to be reviewed at this meeting.

15-034 Holmes Cemetery (Erie), \$17,245.75

This cemetery seeks funds to repair 29 dangerous monuments. After discussion, a motion was made, seconded, and unanimously adopted approving the application by this cemetery for funds to repair these dangerous monuments for a total cost of \$17,245.75, subject to availability of funds.

The discussion of this application can be found in the video recording of this meeting at 12:57-17:15.

15-074 Glenwood Cemetery (Erie), \$8,300.18

This cemetery seeks funds to repair 9 dangerous monuments. After discussion, a motion was made, seconded, and unanimously adopted approving the application by this cemetery for funds to repair these dangerous monuments for a total cost of \$8,300.18, subject to availability of funds.

The discussion of this application can be found in the video recording of this meeting at 17:16-19:25.

22-034 Salisbury Cemetery (Herkimer), \$65,037.20

This cemetery seeks funds to repair 48 dangerous monuments. After discussion, a motion was made, seconded, and unanimously adopted approving the application by this cemetery for funds to repair these dangerous monuments for a total cost of \$65,037.20, subject to availability of funds.

The discussion of this application can be found in the video recording of this meeting at 19:26-21:53.

33-041 Olden Barneveld Cemetery (Oneida), \$110,554.24

This cemetery seeks funds to repair 74 dangerous monuments. After discussion, a motion was made, seconded, and unanimously adopted approving the application by this cemetery for funds to repair these dangerous monuments for a total cost of \$110,554.24, subject to availability of funds.

The discussion of this application can be found in the video recording of this meeting at 21:54-25:52.

33-043 Oriskany Cemetery (Oneida), \$70,156.51

This cemetery seeks funds to repair 49 dangerous monuments. After discussion, a motion was made, seconded, and unanimously adopted approving the application by this cemetery for funds to repair these dangerous monuments for a total cost of \$70,156.51, subject to availability of funds.

The discussion of this application can be found in the video recording of this meeting at 25:53-29:51.

33-066 Verona Cemetery (Oneida), \$110,968.22

This cemetery seeks funds to repair 69 dangerous monuments. After discussion, a motion was made, seconded, and unanimously adopted approving the application by this cemetery for funds to repair these dangerous monuments for a total cost of \$110,968.22, subject to availability of funds.

The discussion of this application can be found in the video recording of this meeting at 29:52-32:24.

24-05-E-28 – 60-006 – Ferncliff Cemetery – Major Alteration and Columbarium

The cemetery seeks to develop a section of the cemetery into a cremation “walk” that will include different types of small niches and columbaria. The cemetery has a similar walk at another section of the cemetery that has been very successful. The cemetery posted notices of the project and has reviewed no adverse comment.

After discussion, a motion was made, seconded, and unanimously adopted approving the applications for alteration and columbaria construction subject to the receipt of any required permits.

The discussion of this determination can be found in the video recording of this meeting at 33:45-39:22.

24-05-F-29 – 60-016 – Oakwood Cemetery – Amendment to Major Alteration Application

The Board approved a major alteration, a new garage and office, for this cemetery in 2019. Over the past five years, the cost of construction has more than doubled. Based on Division Accountant Emmanuel Blugh’s review, the cemetery can afford this increase in cost.

After discussion, a motion was made, seconded, and unanimously adopted to approve the amendment to this major alteration application subject to the receipt of required permits.

The discussion of this application can be found in the video recording of this meeting at 39:33-42:19.

Public Comment

Glen Kennedy from South Hill Cemetery, Ithaca thanked the Division for its Cemetery 101 outreach programs. Mr. Kennedy and his community members have found the sessions very helpful.

David Fleming, representing the NYS Association of Cemeteries also thanked the division for their efforts in cleaning up cemetery processes and expanding education and outreach programs across the State.

The next regular monthly Cemetery Board meeting is scheduled for June 11, 2024, at 10:30 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 11:06 a.m.