

# DIVISION OF CEMETERIES

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TO: NEW YORK STATE CEMETERY BOARD

FROM: LEWIS A. POLISHOOK, Director

CC: ROBERT VANDERBLES, Counsel

SUBJECT: REPORT ON AT-RISK CEMETERIES

DATE: OCTOBER 6, 2025

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The regulations of the New York State Cemetery Board (the Board) provide that the Division of Cemeteries (the Division) "may at any time determine that a cemetery is at risk of abandonment and, together with the cemetery, takes the following steps, as appropriate, to avoid abandonment" (19 NYCRR § 202.3(a)), and list various steps, including meeting with the cemetery's board and lot owners, local officials, and other cemeteries, and performing audits and inspections, to help avoid abandonment. The regulations also provide that, "[a]t least quarterly, the division shall report to the board any actions taken pursuant" to that section. Id. § 202.3(g).

This report lists cemeteries that:

1. the Division has identified as at risk of abandonment;
2. were abandoned or conveyed to a town in calendar year 2024 to date;
3. appear to be abandoned or have been conveyed but await a final Division determination; and
4. staved off abandonment after board or special lot owners meetings or other intervention the Division facilitated in calendar year 2024.

## **CEMETERIES AT RISK OF ABANDONMENT**

### **Prospect Hill, No. 01-023 (Albany)**

This cemetery has struggled to identify new directors and its Treasurer would like to resign once the cemetery finds a replacement. We have recommended that she meet with her board and the Town to seek assistance recruiting new directors. If these efforts are unsuccessful, we will work with the cemetery to notice and hold a special lot owners meeting.

### **Deposit Pine Grove, No. 04-005 (Broome)**

This cemetery has a \$14,000 deficit in its permanent maintenance fund and little to no income each year. It is nearly sold out and the President wishes to resign soon. The board has been unable to identify interest board members. We have encouraged the President to reach out to the Town and will try to work with the cemetery to see if the Town can help identify suitable individuals.

### **Willow Brook Park, No. 07-061 (Chautauqua)**

The cemetery continues to look for new trustees and officers. The cemetery successfully raised funds to mark unmarked infant graves and will solicit additional donations via social media. A volunteer is working on fundraising for the chapel.

### **Methodist, No. 13-029 (Delaware)**

This cemetery has only one active, elderly board member, who wishes to retire. This cemetery has under \$20,000 in total assets and is sold out. The Town of Roxbury has communicated with the trustee regarding the future of the cemetery but has been unable to identify prospective trustees. The trustee's daughter and son-in-law are also assisting with cemetery operations, although they are not board members. For now, the cemetery continues to maintain itself, but it needs new board members.

### **Union Cemetery of Springbrook, No. 15-065 (Erie)**

The cemetery president wants to step down this fall. The treasurer wants to step down in the next few years. In addition to publishing an ad in the paper, the cemetery posted notice of lot owner's meeting in the cemetery, at town hall, the post office, library, senior center, hardware store, and on Facebook pages. The sexton also mentions to families that they are welcome to attend meetings. The cemetery held a normally-scheduled semi-annual lot owner's meeting on April 16, 2025, which the division attended. More than 20 people attended the meeting (typically six to seven people or fewer attend). The cemetery added two new trustees from the meeting. Officials from the Town of Elma did not attend. The cemetery invites the Town to every meeting, but town officials never attend. The cemetery is doing well financially. The cemetery recently converted some low interest savings accounts to higher interest CDs. The next semi-annual lot owner's meeting is scheduled for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of October (October 15th at 7pm at the Elma Senior Center).

### **Prospect Hill, No. 18-012 (Fulton)**

The cemetery currently lacks a full complement of officers and directors. The acting treasurer and Town Supervisor are working together to recruit new board members. We will meet with them and prospective members once the acting treasurer schedules a meeting.

### **Crane Memorial, No. 22-042 (Herkimer)**

Division staff met with the current treasurer for a field examination in June 2025. The treasurer communicated that the board has one member. The treasurer and her father (previous treasurer) have had a difficult time finding new trustees to join the board. They were going to contact a few other individuals to join the board. We explained what happens when a cemetery is abandoned. The treasurer and her father voiced concern over abandonment and the care of the cemetery under the Town going forward. We advised them to set up a special lot owners' meeting, publicize the meeting in a local periodical, invite the local Town manager/clerk, post on the Town of Warren's website and social media, and place a notice at the cemetery. As of October 6, the meeting date has not been determined. We will also be present at the meeting to answer questions.

### **Hawks Cherry Hill, No. 27-038 (Madison)**

Division staff received a call from Amy Markowski, who is serving as the current secretary/treasurer informing that the cemetery was scammed out of all of their funds either 1 or 2 years ago. Amy explains that the cemetery only has two trustees including herself and \$1,092.13 in the bank and the cemetery does not have enough resources to continue to operate. Amy further explains that the Town of Georgetown has agreed to take over the maintenance until

the abandonment process can be completed. We will work with the cemetery and Town to discuss ways of publicizing the meeting to maximize the odds of people attending.

**Pine Hill, No. 36-027 (Orange)**

The board of this cemetery purported to resign en masse on July 19, 2025. Initially, the board thought the Town of Wawayanda would assume responsibility, but the cemetery has adequate funds and cannot be deemed abandoned. We are working with another cemetery in the region to take over operations under a management contract. We believe that there would be at least three individuals willing to serve as a board if all they have to do is oversee that contract. The Town is aware of the situation and we should have a further update soon.

**Transit, No. 37-015 (Orleans)**

The officers of this cemetery would like to step down but have been unable to recruit successors. They have not reached out to us in a while, but we will follow up with them to check on status.

**Summit, No. 44-009 (Rockland)**

The former President of this cemetery resigned and other board members also would like to step down. The cemetery has less than \$2,000 left in funds, along with some stocks. We have unsuccessfully attempted to schedule a meeting with the Town and cemetery officials, but the cemetery is likely to run out of funds this month.

**Garfield, No. 45-025 (St. Lawrence)**

This cemetery is non-compliant with the requirement to file annual reports and we have received a FOIL request from someone concerned about lack of maintenance. We are trying to locate any current officers or directors or contact information for a caretaker.

**Bath, No. 51-004 (Steuben)**

This cemetery is struggling financially, but its board is committed to continuing to operate it as a public cemetery corporation. The Town is considering providing municipal assistance.

**Willow Hill, No. 52-060 (Suffolk)**

Willow Hill Cemetery is in danger of abandonment. The cemetery has no funds and needs additional trustees and assistance. It is largely inactive, but must be maintained. The cemetery is also covering expense through the use of volunteers. The cemetery also appears to have a deficit in its PM fund. We will follow up with the President and reach out to the town to consider options.

**Flemingville, No. 54-006 (Tioga)**

The President of the cemetery called the Division to indicate that the cemetery is at risk of abandonment. We reached out to the Town and scheduled a special lot owners' meeting. The Town Clerk indicated that the Town could pay for a legal notice to advertise a special lot owner's meeting and that there was interest in avoiding abandonment. They held this meeting on October 22, 2024. We identified no additional new trustees; however, a significant portion of what we believed to be this cemetery is owned by a neighboring church, which also has its own cemetery. We are seeking to clarify ownership of these parcels and find out the future of the church and its property. We again contacted the cemetery on January 9, 2025; the cemetery will continue to operate until we get clarity from the church as to its intentions concerning its parcel. In March 2025, we were notified that the church has disbanded but that the church's attorneys are working to determine ownership of the land where the cemetery is located. In all likelihood, this cemetery will be abandoned, but it is unclear how the Town could take

responsibility for a cemetery where ownership remains unclear and where part of the cemetery may in fact be a religious cemetery.

**Saugerties, No. 56-031 (Ulster)**

The Division received a call from the treasurer Georgette Hughes on March 14, 2025. She informed us of the cemetery's intention to be abandoned to the Town. A field exam was conducted on January 3, 2025, that concluded a large permanent maintenance deficit and almost no room for future interments or lot sales. We met with the cemetery's board and Town Supervisor on March 31, 2025, to discuss options going forward. The Town has offered support as needed; the cemetery is working on fundraising and believes it has sufficient resources to operate for another year. We will work with the cemetery and Town to try to identify new officers and directors.

**Sciota Rural, No. 58-018 (Washington)**

Division staff received a call from one of the three remaining trustees in early June 2025. She said the trustees were no longer able to operate the cemetery. She also said the Town has been maintaining the cemetery. Division staff advised her to advertise and hold a special lot owners meeting prior to abandonment.

**ABANDONMENTS**

**Medway Christian, No. 20-019**

At its July 15, 2025, meeting, the Board confirmed the Division's determination that Medway Christian Cemetery is abandoned.

**VOLUNTARY CONVEYANCES**

**Haines Falls, No. 20-011**

The Town of Hunter accepted conveyance of this cemetery by resolution dated May 20, 2025.

**Cold Springs, No. 51-012 (Steuben)**

The cemetery had very little activity and no burials over the last 20 plus years. The cemetery was cared for and well maintained by the same family for the last five generations. The last officer, Kris Brundage, who was moving out of state earlier in 2025, met with the Town Board, who stated that it will "assume control" in April 2025. The town reports that it has adopted a resolution accepting the conveyance of the cemetery to the Town in April 2025. The Town Supervisor will complete and return conveyance resolution documents to the Division.

**DETERMINATION PENDING**

**Columbus Center, No. 09-004 (Chenango)**

The sole remaining board member died, a portion of the cemetery's funds went to unclaimed funds, there is no activity, and the Town has been unable to identify new potential directors. Someone is maintaining the cemetery, but nobody seems to know who

**Churchtown, No. 11-008 (Columbia)**

The Division received a letter from the sole remaining trustee stating that he is no longer willing to operate the cemetery alone and the cemetery does not have the funds to maintain the grounds. The cemetery is split between the Town of Claverack and the Town of Taghkanic. A special meeting was held 2/25 and no new trustees came forward. Division staff was informed

that the two towns would be entering into a maintenance agreement; we await further information about this agreement. We are drafting a determination of abandonment; this matter is likely to go before the Board in November 2025.

**Mountain View, No. 16-015 (Essex)**

This cemetery held a special lot owners' meeting to try to identify new directors but no one was willing to serve, and lacks sufficient funds to operate. We anticipate putting this matter before the Board in November 2025.

**Prospect, No. 33-047 (Oneida)**

After a special lot owners meeting, this cemetery lacks both officers and funds to operate; we are preparing a determination of abandonment.

**Oliverea Rural, No. 56-025 (Ulster)**

The Town of Shandanken seems to have voted to accept the voluntary conveyance of this cemetery to the Town on March 3, 2025, but it is unclear whether the cemetery had a board at the time, let alone whether such a board voted to convey the cemetery. After the Town accepted the cemetery, it facilitated noticing special lot owners' meeting to elect a board. Several lot owners attended; they were willing to volunteer to help the cemetery but unwilling to serve on the board. We have been unable to access the cemetery's financial records because the officer on the accounts died and the bank will not release information about those accounts. We are reviewing this matter to determine whether this is a conveyance or abandonment, as the Town has indicated that it will seek abandonment funds.

**SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTION**

**Weedsport Rural Cemetery, No. 06-035 (Cayuga)**

The Division has received a call from Association President David Kinney who informed that the cemetery was receiving a cut in maintenance funding from the Town that jeopardizes its ability to meet its obligation to maintain the cemetery at current levels. The cemetery has entered into a new agreement for maintenance, with continued municipal assistance, and continues to work on succession planning for trustees. At present, this cemetery is no longer at risk of abandonment.

**West Plattsburgh, No. 10-023 (Clinton)**

This cemetery was down to one active board member who was unable to continue to serve. The cemetery has successfully recruited a new board and is no longer at risk of abandonment.

**Maple Grove, No. 28-016 (Monroe)**

In September 2025, a large tree in the cemetery partially collapsed, with limbs falling onto a neighboring property, causing damage to the adjacent fence. The estimated cost of approximately \$7,000 for cleanup and repairs exceeded the cemetery's available funds, raising concerns about potential abandonment to the Town of Ogden. The cemetery sought assistance from the Town, but the Town lacked the proper equipment to help. The Town Clerk contacted Division Investigator Michael Catena to discuss possible solutions for the cemetery to avoid abandonment. We provided information to the cemetery about alternative financial options, including fundraising and requesting to borrow from its PM Fund. Given the urgency of the situation, the cemetery felt it needed to act more quickly than the PM loan process would allow.

The cemetery was able to find someone to clean up the fallen limbs, remove the tree, and repair the fence at a negotiated lower cost. Although this expense has decreased the cemetery's available funds, it can continue operating and is no longer at risk of abandonment.

**Pike Cemetery, No. 61-022 (Wyoming)**

In June 2025, the cemetery contacted the Division to discuss potential abandonment to the Town of Pike, citing concerns about finding successor board members. At the time, the cemetery board had only four members, with three wishing to resign. The cemetery held a special lot owner's meeting in August 2025 with Division Investigator Cindi Craig in attendance. Two trustees agreed to remain on the board until the end of the year. In September 2025, we met with Town Supervisor Eric Smith and cemetery secretary Brianna Stone to discuss the cemetery's status. Mr. Smith reported finding two additional people willing to join the board. Secretary Stone will arrange a cemetery board meeting in the near future to add them to the board. We have offered to provide training to the cemetery board, ensuring future success.

**Bellona, No. 62-001 (Yates)**

We participated in a special lot owners meeting for this cemetery in early October; the lot owners elected six new directors. The cemetery is no longer at risk of abandonment. We will work with the new board members to provide technical assistance.