

Despite our best efforts, we're struggling with a "perfect storm" of problems

Grass not mowed as often as it should be. Downed trees. Toppled monuments. Rough roads...

You know, and we know, that the once immaculate Cortland Rural Cemetery is not what it used to be. What's less well known — and key to *improving* our situation — is "why" we're struggling.

1) Revenues from burials have fallen precipitously

From an average of 150 burials a year in the early 1900s, burials have declined to about 30 a year (a drop of 80%); moreover, most of these are within plots purchased and paid for long ago.

Why the decline? In a word: Cremations. Since 1960, cremations both nationwide and at the CRC have increased from about 5% to nearly 50%...with more and more of them not being placed in cemeteries like ours.

2) We are 100% reliant on revenues from operations, donations, and volunteerism — NOT taxpayer funds from the City of Cortland

Many people assume the CRC is operated and funded by the city, county, or even NYS. Not so. Unlike the Glenwood Cemetery in Homer (whose village-funded budget is over \$100,000 a year) or St. Mary's (which receives analogous support from the Catholic Diocese in Syracuse) ~ the CRC is a non-denominational, non-profit cemetery that runs on modest revenues from operations (about \$30,000 last year) and from grants/donations. Considering that our operating budget is about \$100,000 — you can see the gap we need to make up each year!

3) Labor & fuel costs have skyrocketed, far outpacing our State-mandated "Permanent Maintenance Fund"

Seeing that gravesites from the 1800s and early 1900s were no longer being cared for by families, NYS introduced a law in the late 1940s mandating that portions of burial fees were to be held in reserve to cover future cemetery care. More specifically, 'interest' from each cemetery's PMF was to be used for annual upkeep, while the 'principal' was to be saved to cover maintenance once a cemetery ceases operation.

Good idea. Unfortunately, inflation soon outpaced these reserves, making dollars paid into the PMF in the 1950s-1990s worth pennies today.

Exacerbating this problem for the CRC, a previous administration (when faced with fast-declining revenues) mistakenly used some principal from our PMF to maintain the cemetery in the 1990s. Today, we're charged with returning these dollars using

some of our already diminished operating revenues.

Keeping the
Cortland Rural
Cemetery
beautiful is a
MONUMENTAL
task.

Please help!

How you can help

Rest assured: We are doing all we can to secure new grants and donations; to stretch our budget (e.g.: offering housing to staff in lieu of a compensation, repairing equipment, etc.); to encourage volunteerism; and to find new strategies to achieve sustainability.

Meantime, YOU can help us meet these challenges, first, by understanding our predicament — then, by converting your understandable frustration (we are frustrated, too!) into a donation of cash, equipment, materials, or time. Thank you!

Donations
welcome &
appreciated!

Checks may be made payable to the *Cortland Rural Cemetery Foundation*. Or donate via our website using a Credit Card or PayPal.

The Cortland Rural Cemetery
~ "Lest we forget." ~
www.cortland-rural-cemetery.com