

Cooperation was key to finally cleaning up Riverview Cemetery

Happy endings and cemeteries aren't usually thought of together. But what's happening at Wilmington's Riverview Cemetery, which had fallen into desolation, may make that likely.

At 8 a.m. Tuesday morning, a team of professional cemetery groundskeepers, hired by the City of Wilmington, rolled through the gates. They are being aided by workers and equipment from the Wilmington Parks and Recreation Department, the state Parks Division, and inmates from the Department of Correction. Together they began grooming the 87-acre cemetery because the operators, three Odd Fellows and Knights of Pythias lodges, have gone broke.

It is expected to take 12 days to restore the cemetery to its former dignity. The intervention is a temporary solution, pending legal settlements and a change of ownership.

Four politicians — state Sen. Harris McDowell, Wilmington Mayor James Baker, City Councilman Charles Potter and Gov. Minner — joined forces to make it happen quickly.

Speed was essential because as of last week Riverview Cemetery was on the verge of becoming a public health and safety hazard. Weeds, billowing in the breeze like waves, were higher than most headstones. The cemetery was an invitation to mischief.

This is an example of how government decision makers should work together to solve problems that have slipped beyond simple solutions. Bravo.