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# FRIENDS OF THE CEMETERY

MEDINA, OHIO

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## City Budget Cuts Affect Cemeteries

With the failure of the income tax levy in November, the City promised sweeping budget cuts and the cemeteries have been hit hard!

It was projected from the onset that all seasonal and part-time labor would be eliminated, leaving one person (the sexton) to maintain 34 acres at Spring Grove and the approximate 2-1/2 acres at Old Town Graveyard. The sexton is also responsible for selling burial lots, seeing to the needs of grieving families, overseeing the opening and closing of graves, digging footers and maintaining cemetery records.

The position of City Forester had also in danger of being cut. For the past year and a half Tim Swanson, the City Forester, has been charged with the day to day supervision of cemetery personnel.

Now that the dust has settled, we know that, indeed, all seasonal and part-time labor has been eliminated from the cemetery budget. The City is currently interviewing candidates, from within the City's labor force, to assume the position of sexton to replace the former sexton who left several months ago. After his departure, Tim Swanson became acting sexton. The job switch was meant to be temporary until the outcome of the November vote and ensuing budget process. Once the new sexton is hired, Tim will resume his position of City Forester. We were thankful that his position was not eliminated and that Tim will continue to oversee the cemetery operations and will be able to train the next sexton.

So, what's the bottom line? Minimum maintenance. We may have to get used to seeing sections with tall grass or gravestones with weeds around them because there is no one to weed whack. We may see "road closed" signs due to the lack of snow removal. We may not have our concerns addressed and or questions answered in a timely manner since the sexton has 50 footers to dig.

This is why the Friends of the Cemetery plays such an important role! The continued preservation and maintenance of our cemeteries cannot be left to the whims of politics or discontented voters. Not withstanding the good will of the City toward our cemeteries, much of the improvements that the public sees in our City cemeteries have not been funded by public money. Even as grounds maintenance and public service may decline due to the financial situation of the City,

long term improvements will still continue to be done through private funding.

*"SHOW ME THE MANNER IN WHICH A NATION OR COMMUNITY CARES FOR ITS DEAD AND I WILL MEASURE WITH MATHEMATICAL EXACTNESS THE TENDER MERCIES OF ITS PEOPLE, THEIR RESPECT FOR THE LAW OF THE LAND, AND THEIR LOYALTY TO HIGH IDEALS."* William Gladstone

## Project Updates

**Lake Project** – Behnke Associates completed Design Development Drawings in July and presented them to the Friends of the Cemetery and Medina City Cemetery Commission. The next phase of this project is the Construction Drawings. The Letha E. House Foundation has granted funds to Friends of the Cemetery for this phase and Behnke has begun work on the drawings.

The Army Corps of Engineers considers the ravine between the proposed new lake and the existing lake as a wetland. This area will not be disturbed except for some clean up of litter and removal of non-native plant material etc. There is also a small wetland to the west of the old lake. When the cemetery was created in 1883, there was a series of wet ravines on the site. We are happy to retain this remnant of the original topography.

**Perennial Garden** – We were so pleased with the job Julie Kovacs, The Traveling Gardener, did this past season at the perennial garden. Even with the drought conditions, the garden was just beautiful spring, summer and fall. The annuals around the soldier's monument were magnificent. We have found a gem in Julie and plan to use her services for the 2003 season.

We wish to thank the Willard Stephenson Foundation and the Feckley Charitable Foundation for their generous funding of this year's (2002) garden maintenance. Friends of the Cemetery are seeking funding for the maintenance of the perennial garden for the 2003. We would welcome private or corporate donations. All donations to the Friends of the Cemetery are tax deductible.

**Baby Section** – The Oddfellows did such an excellent job of maintaining the Baby Section throughout the season! The hedge that was installed in the spring of 2001 has filled out and looks just great. The perennials thrived as well, thanks to

the watering and weeding that was done. The grass stayed a lush green all summer due to daily sprinkling.

It is important for the public to realize that City workers do not mow or maintain the Baby Section grounds. The Oddfellows, under Jerry Gunner's direction, mow, water, weed, mulch, clip and tend this very special place. We thank and appreciate them!

**Tree Work** – The Friends of the Cemetery entered into a contract with The Davey Tree Expert Company for tree work to be done at both Old Town Graveyard and Spring Grove Cemetery. The work done at Old Town was completed in October. This included core-aerating, deep-root fertilization and mulching of 20 young trees. Also included was the pruning of seven old trees and clearing out a weed thicket.

The tree work at Spring Grove will be completed in December and will include the pruning of 23 older trees and a micro-nutrient injection to an old Pin Oak tree.

The Friends of the Cemetery are committed to the preservation and maintenance of the trees at both Old Town Graveyard and Spring Grove Cemetery.

**Flag Pole** - Hopefully everyone has noticed and appreciates the illumination of the flag pole at Spring Grove. Not only is the flag illuminated during the night hours, but the chapel looks lovely in the backdrop. We again thank the Medina VFW Post 5137 for their generosity in funding the lighting.

We also thank F.O.C. member, Jim Cook, who has agreed to prepare and paint the flagpole itself. This will not be an easy task, considering the height. We are in the process of trying to find a way to get Jim to the top. The City's bucket truck doesn't reach high enough and the Fire Chief has declined to lend the snorkel truck. We were hoping that someone who has a "cherry picker" might be willing to help us out. The job needs to be completed before Memorial Day as the rope on the flag pole must also be repaired in order to be able to lower and raise the flag for the Memorial Day festivities.

If you know of someone who would be willing to help in this effort, please contact Art Riedel at (330) 722-2706.

## **Watering Cans, Litter Receptacles and "Gatorbags"**

The Friends of the Cemetery purchased and donated watering cans for use at Spring Grove Cemetery. These replaced the empty milk jugs on a rope that have been the means for watering for many years.

Two new Victor Stanley litter receptacles have also been ordered by F.O.C. These receptacles are identical to the two that are currently standing near the chapel. The two new ones will replace the 50 gallon drums located at the front of Section 17 and near the mausoleum. Our goal is to replace all of the 50-gallon drums throughout Spring Grove. People may be interested in purchasing a memorial litter receptacle from Friends. This would be a good way to help beautify the cemetery by providing a good-looking and long-lasting improvement.

Friends of the Cemetery purchased 15 "gatorbags" for irrigation of the younger trees in the cemeteries. These bags turned out to be indispensable through the drought this summer.

## **Memorial Contributions**

Ted McDowell, a friend of the cemeteries, passed away in August at his home in New York State and was laid to rest, along with his wife Toody, in his family plot at Spring Grove. Mr. McDowell was a generous supporter of this organization. At the time of his death, his family named the Friends of the Cemetery, as recipient of memorial gifts in his name.

Ted's great-uncle, O.H. McDowell was trustee and secretary-treasurer of Spring Grove Cemetery from its inception until his death.

We thank those who made contributions to Friends of the Cemetery in memory of Ted McDowell. These donations are earmarked for the perennial garden maintenance fund.

Memorial gifts to the Cemetery are a fitting way to remember loved ones who are interred there.

## **Endowment Fund**

The Friends of the Cemetery have taken the first steps to establish a private endowment fund for our City cemeteries. Our trustees have appointed an Endowment Fund Committee composed of trustees Dave Kellogg, John Gill, Dennis Leach and Cynthia Szunyog. They are in the process of determining the details of how the endowment fund will operate. F.O.C. member, Janis Zachman has offered to provide professional assistance.

We hope that supporters of the cemeteries will take advantage of the opportunity to help ensure the care and maintenance of these beautiful and sacred places far into the future. During the planning process we welcome input from those who may

be interested in contributing to the endowment fund or who may have expertise in this area.

## New Trustee

John Gill was elected a trustee of Friends of the Cemetery in August, 2002. He is serving out the term of former Trustee, John Wetzel. John Gill has been involved in supporting and preserving the Medina City cemeteries for years. He has spent countless hours in historical research at the cemeteries. He is directing the development of a new database system for use in maintaining cemetery records. He advises the City regarding stone-straightening projects and is currently helping with the research and development of signage for the cemeteries. He has kept a watchful eye over the mausoleum project. John is a regular visitor to the cemeteries and probably knows the grounds better than anyone in the area. We welcome John to the Board.

## National Register of Historic Places

Spring Grove Cemetery is in the final stages of application to the National Register of Historic Places. A committee made up of F.O.C. members, Joann King, Susan McKiernan, Janet Senkar, John Gill and Cynthia Szunyog, is working on the many necessary forms. We will keep you informed as we go through this very lengthy and involved process.

## Membership List

Enclosed in this newsletter is a current listing of Friends of the Cemetery. If you don't see your name on the list, it could be that you forgot to send in your membership contribution during the 2002 year. Please use the enclosed self-addressed envelope, with our membership schedule listed on the flap, to mail your membership for 2003. If you don't see your friends, neighbors and/or relatives listed, why not encourage them to become Friends of the Cemetery and pass the enclosed envelope on to them.

## Thoughts From Our Cemetery Advocate

By: Art Riedel

The blazing colors of fall were again spectacular at Spring Grove Cemetery. I had especially observed the west front line of Red Sunset maples which, in passing, seemed to enamor a group of high school students to walk an inside trail beneath

the canopy of bright scarlet foliage. How quickly the season changed and the snow came early while foliage yet remained on the trees.

Spring Grove, however, provides interesting natural amenities for all seasons and attracts joggers, hikers, bikers, historians, genealogists and bird watchers on a regular basis.

The regulars, as well as many newcomers, have come to know the spacious winding drive-trails through Spring Grove trees, gardens and lakes, and regard the serene park environment as one of Medina's greatest and convenient-to-town amenities.

As we think into the future development and maintenance at Spring Grove, we consider what those who have passed have done for us and now what we should do for the preservation of an environment for our posterity. City budget restrictions will require that more contributions from outside sources, increased membership and foundation support be necessary. Grounds improvement and maintenance projects are being considered for 2003 by the Friends of the Cemetery and support preparation for the annual Memorial Day event will be needed.

Purchasing of memorial trees has been a very popular way of dedication to our loved ones and supports re-forestation and growth, not only of our cemetery grounds, but also for our total environment. Memorial plaques are also available. Phone for information or order: Art Riedel (330) 722-2706 or Tim Swanson (330) 722-9056.

This fall, Old Town Graveyard received a much needed revamp of the younger trees and grounds around them. Davey Tree Expert Company was contracted to prune, circle and break hard surface of bed around twenty 3"-6" caliper trees and ornamentals to access core-aerating and irrigation. The trees were then also fed and mulched to neatly profile a walk through the old historical grounds.

Additional large tree pruning maintenance remains to be done by Davey at Spring Grove. Now in the third successive year of caring for our forest sentinels, there is also an evolutionary process in the care and upbringing process of our younger and newly-planted trees. We should never cease to be grateful to the Letha E. House Foundation for its endowment to perpetuate the support of this essential program for the growth of both Spring Grove and Old Town cemeteries.

In conclusion, there is much more to be done. Please note the opportunities to support which endear us to common ground. Assure a future environment by extending your enthusiasm – solicitation to a friend, neighbor, business associate or support group. Pulling together in stringent times, encouraging a focus on worth goals, come forth with your expertise,

contributions and creative management ideas. Isn't it worth a prayer to say "together we can do it!"