



Fair View Cemetery and Cedar Lawn Memorial Park

Historical Assets and Critical Local Infrastructure Worthy of Long-Term Public Protection

Historic Fair View Cemetery and Cedar Lawn Memorial Park are important local assets that actively serve the present-day needs of the families who have selected Fair View Cemetery and Cedar Lawn Memorial Park as the final resting place for their loved ones.

These two local historic cemeteries have served the community for a combined 224 years and track the history of both the town of Big Lick and the eventual founding and growth of the City of Roanoke. The cemetery and memorial park are the final resting places of more than 30,000 individuals, including thousands of veterans, 10 Mayors of Big Lick and the City of Roanoke, members of the U.S. Congress, the Virginia Legislature, and the U.S. Federal Judiciary, along with numerous individuals who succumbed to the devastating effects of both the 1918 Flu Pandemic and COVID-19. Additionally, the cemetery is also the final resting place of eight local family cemeteries relocated to Fair View over the past 100 years to make way for the growth and expansion of the City of Roanoke.

FV Cemetery Company Inc. has successfully operated in a not-for-profit capacity since April 30, 1983 and is in good standing with significant assets. Both properties are actively managed by the F V Cemetery Company Inc. whose board of directors is made up of four local business leaders, each of whom have deep community and family connections to the City, the cemetery, and the memorial park. However, the current members of the board of directors are aging, past retirement age, and in some cases in declining health. Planning for the inevitable reality of a necessary transition, the board has spent more than a decade actively, but unsuccessfully, searching for an alternate successor to take over the future operations, management, and stewardship of the cemetery and memorial park.

The board has determined the time has come, as it has for similar cemeteries across the country including the Commonwealth of Virginia, for the non-profit foundation and their board to dissolve and transfer all assets and management responsibility to the City of Roanoke. This procedure is pre-defined by the Foundation's Articles of Incorporation (c. 1983) and is being executed as originally planned in full accordance with Virginia law and established public precedence.

The board chairman reached out to City Manager, Bob Cowell, in June of 2021 to begin conversations with the City and offered the full support of the board to help the city ensure a smooth transition. In late December 2022, after determining they had fully exhausted all possible alternative options, the board officially voted to dissolve the organization effective July 1, 2023.

On February 2, 2023, the Roanoke City Council was formally asked to schedule a hearing to publicly consider, and then officially vote, on the matter. Currently, the board is waiting on a response.

As successful longtime stewards of the properties, the Fair View Group believes that it is in the best interest of all citizens, staff, stakeholders, and families that the Roanoke City Council vote to accept all assets and responsibilities from the F V Cemetery Company Inc.

Current assets include 71 acres of both developed and undeveloped property at 3300 Melrose Ave NW, Roanoke, 24017 "Fair View Cemetery" and 14 acres of both developed and undeveloped property at 5070 Cove Road NW, Roanoke 24017 "Cedar Lawn Memorial Park", office building and maintenance facilities, all equipment necessary to successfully operate and maintain the cemetery and memorial park for long-term public benefit.

In accordance with Virginia law and as provided in the Virginia statute, when a municipality takes over the responsibility for a local cemetery, all trust funds and financial assets, including Perpetual Care funds, must transfer to the municipality. Accepting all assets and responsibilities would allow the City to establish a sustainable long-term operating and maintenance strategy for the cemetery and memorial park to continue operating and supporting community internment needs. As of January 1, 2023, the approximate cash balance of all Fair View funds was \$3,183,641.43. The final value of assets officially transferred to the city will be subject to adjustment due to normal business activities between Jan 1, 2023, and June 30, 2023.

Based on the F V Cemetery board's transition plans and pro forma projections, the City could continue to operate at a significantly reduced cost by shedding compliance burdens not required of public sector entities. They could also leverage existing staff, equipment, and maintenance procedures that have already proven successful. The City could then choose to fold remaining operating costs into the general budget - leveraging existing parks and recreation, or public works management protocols to cost effectively provide necessary services. Alternatively, the City of Roanoke could choose to establish an independent authority to oversee operations and maintenance in the same way the City currently manages public parking lots, Roanoke Transit Authority, The Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority, The Roanoke Civic Center, The Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center, The Roanoke Blacksburg Regional Airport, and other public services deemed necessary but not immediately well-suited to private sector investment.

Fair View Cemetery is committed to ensuring a smooth transition and wants to communicate frequently and openly with all stakeholders whom these decisions may affect. They have established a website at thefairviewgroup.org/transition where all interested parties can

receive accurate and up-to-date information, sign-up for email alerts, and to learn more about how these decisions may affect families, neighbors, staff and broader the industry in the years ahead.

While this process plays out, both Fair View Cemetery and Cedar Lawn Memorial Park will continue to operate as normal. All required staff, equipment, and financials are secure and in place, and, as always, all contracts and commitments will continue to be honored. Interments will also continue as normal. As additional details about the upcoming transition are solidified that information will also be provided at thefairviewgroup.org/transition.

The proposed transfer of cemetery management and responsibility from a non-profit entity to public sector management is an established process with successful examples all over Virginia, including the surrounding communities of Blacksburg, Christiansburg, Salem, Lexington (2), Lynchburg and Danville (8).

The City's adoption of the cemetery and memorial park will allow the Roanoke Valley to continue to benefit from the proper and responsible management of necessary local infrastructure, ensure an important community need continues to be met, and help protect beautiful open spaces in areas of the City known to be economically vulnerable.

When the City Council hearing is scheduled, the public will be invited to share their opinions on the matter. If you are interested in supporting this initiative, and the long-term preservation of both the current and historical assets it represents, please go to thefairviewgroup.org/transition and register to receive email updates so the Fair View Group can keep you and your family up-to-date regarding the many different ways you will be able to share your thoughts with the City of Roanoke's top elected officials.

Thank you for your support in this important matter.