



## CENTRAL CEMETERY ASSOCIATION OF BROOKFIELD

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September 23, 2020

Thomas S. Marrion  
Hinckley Allen  
20 Church Street  
Hartford, CT 06103-1221

Dear Tom:

Thank you for your written summary and assistance during recent merger discussions with the Bridgeport Diocese.

We can close the engagement with the Diocese for now. In follow-up discussions, the range of impediments make moving forward seem unlikely.

As for the written summary, there is a point of emphasis to be added. Our situation is an example of a chronic state-wide problem that is systemic in nature. Intervention is required.

To that end, outside the scope of work for Central Cemetery, we ask that Hinckley Allen consider as part of its pro bono activity, elevating awareness of this situation to the Attorney General.

Today, passive income from safe investments, alone, is no longer sufficient to sustain organizations like ours. Economies of scale and expanded business activity supported with modern technologies are necessary for survival.

For three years we have sought merger, consolidation, or collaboration in one form or another with more than 20 organizations.

We have met with judges, mayors, regional and state officials, attorneys, accountants, other cemetery operators, vendors, contractors, journalists, and membership associations. We have left a paper trail of these efforts, noting: the lack of state oversight; of accounting for an estimated \$400,000,000 held in cemetery association treasuries for perpetual care; of a trade or professional association; of incentives to improve the status quo; of cogency in the law; of related continuing education within the legal and accounting professions; of training for responsible parties; and the appropriateness of volunteers doing the public health task of interring bodies.

Our aspiration and theme, presented in a 2019 front-page story in the *News-Times*, is to *regionalize, professionalize, modernize*.

The response we have received is, perhaps, best summarized in the words of a Brookfield native and 16 year-member of the Connecticut House of Representatives, who said, "I don't believe in regionalization."



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It is a disturbing attitude that will continue the long decline into insolvency and abandonment of hundreds of cemeteries around the state. That attitude has for many of us exhausted the reserves of good will and generosity of spirit that once accompanied this undertaking.

Of this situation and others like it, two partners with a large accounting firm told us plainly: “Walk away.”

And that is what citizens and corporations are doing. If you are not familiar with the *Gallup* and *Hartford Courant* polls about the exodus from Connecticut, the numbers are sobering.

Separately, I have been asked to speak on the plight of cemeteries in Connecticut at an event in November. I intend to characterize this as a troubling case study in what Garrett Hardin, writing over 50 years ago in the technical journal, *Science*, termed, “The Tragedy of the Commons.”

These are problems for which solutions are found in morality, not technology. They hinge on what constitutes individual freedom versus societal necessity. The unifying spirit expressed by early Connecticut settlers found in the 1639 *Guilford Covenant* has been replaced by a spirit of disunity and self-determined entitlement that has eroded Connecticut’s once admirable moral fabric.

These comments are an aside from the practical matter for which we sought your counsel. I offer them as an invitation to you and Hinckley Allen to engage in a conversation at the state-level.

Tom, thank you for your involvement with this matter. We will keep you informed of our progress, as necessary. We have calls scheduled with First Selectman, Steve Dunn, and with Probate Judge Martin Landgrebe, to discuss the procedure for approaching the Superior Court for an intervention that will install a new Board.

Thank you, again, for your assistance with this matter.

Sincerely,

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Jeffrey G. Nolan  
Treasurer

See: <https://www.centralcemetery.net/docs.html>