

Veteran's Graves Upkeep Working Group

Overview

The CT State Veterans Cemetery and the Cemetery of the CT State Veterans Home respectively located in Middletown and Rocky Hill are the only CT State owned and maintained veterans' cemeteries. CT does not have a National Veterans Cemetery.

There are sections of private or municipally owned cemeteries designated for veterans and one which is owned and maintained by the Town of Windsor which is exclusively for resident veterans and their spouses. The Town of Bloomfield has a small section of Mountain View Cemetery that the town reserves for veterans who are residents of Bloomfield.

All these cemeteries are well maintained and while in some seasons of the year they may pose more of a problem for maintenance, they are in excellent condition.

The vast majority of CT Veterans since before WWI are buried in private cemeteries managed and maintained by a municipality, private non-profit society or association, religious cemeteries, i.e. Jewish Cemeteries owned by a synagogue or association, the Catholic Cemetery Association, Islamic Cemeteries owned by and for the burial of those of the Muslim faith; etc.

The vast majority of CT veterans since before WWI are buried in these private Not for Profit Association type cemeteries including those owned and maintained by a CT municipality.

Many CT cemeteries, including veteran's graves within those cemeteries, are maintained satisfactorily to excellent. There are cemeteries or sections of cemeteries that are not cared for well for various reasons, most of which is lack of funds to properly mow, trim, and maintain the grounds or a lack of leadership in setting high standards of care.

There is also a statute that requires all cemeteries are subject to an annual financial statement reporting requirement to the probate court in the district they are located to show the income and expenses of maintenance and financial health of those cemeteries. This requirement has not been kept up as there is no state agency charged with its compliance.

Recommendations of the Working Group

1. Move authority from probate court to municipality
 - a. Municipality applies for any grant funding available to cemeteries.
2. To be included in the report:
 - a. Utilize current statute – CGS § 27-123, highlight lack of current compliance/enforcement.

Each town must appoint three veterans to ensure the care of wartime veterans' graves within the town. The town must appropriate funds for the maintenance costs if private persons or cemetery trustees do not pay for the upkeep.
3. Going forward three veterans appointed by each town to handle complaints regarding municipally owned cemeteries.
 - a. Establish enforcement mechanism to ensure towns appoint three veterans.
 - i. Establish time frame.
 - b. DCP would handle complaints regarding non-municipally owned cemeteries (private and ecclesiastical cemeteries)
 - i. Which may require additional staff in DCP
4. Establish grants for municipalities regarding cemetery upkeep for all municipally operated cemeteries.
 - a. Specify veterans' graves
5. Provide notification to all cemeteries about updated statute, likely disseminated through municipalities.
 - a. Would come from DCP and or OPM.
6. Engage Representative Foster and Senator Honig to write a bill based on our recommendations to process through the General Assembly's upcoming session.