

“Ovid Union Cemetery Association to Reorganize”

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By Neil Chaffie

A group of local citizens has decided that the Ovid Union Cemetery Association will not be abandoned.

Five people agreed to being seated as members of the cemetery association and will sit down with two incumbent members on Thursday, July 19 to organize and also launch a fund raising campaign. The meeting will be held at 7 p.m. in the Ovid fire station on Main Street.

Paul McPherson, association chairman, has agreed to serve another year with the current vice chairman, David Eastman, doing the same. The two men said they will use the coming year to help acquaint the new members with the workings of the association.

The newcomers include Leon Kelly a former village trustee and mayor for 16 years, Leonard Reynolds, Gertrude Fischer, and Mark Jauquet, all of Ovid, and John White of Trumansburg. All five volunteered their services during the recent annual meeting of the association.

Had they not stepped up, the cemetery association would have folded because the care and upkeep of the nearly 14-acre cemetery is becoming a liability to the Town of Ovid.

One of those at the meeting with investigator Cynthia T. Craig and accountant Chris Cosco, both with the New York State Division of Cemeteries, was Town of Ovid supervisor David L. Dresser. Dresser said he did not want to see the town left with the care of the cemetery and was glad to see five people offer their services as association members. He promised his “personal support for your effort. I think it will work.”

What the revamped association is expected to work out Thursday night is a letter writing campaign intended to raise the money to create a trust fund. Income from the fund would be used to help care for the cemetery and its role in the community.

McPherson, in a report during the annual meeting, said the association has \$59,475 on hand. But of that amount, \$40,000 are “restricted funds” that can’t be used for care and upkeep. Of the \$19,475 available, the association will spend \$9,500 this year for mowing and trimming. Some funds will also be allocated to the care of grave sites, markers, upkeep of the grounds and buildings.

“We’re operating, but not for the long run,” McPherson told the group. Income is down, he continued, due to the loss of the Willard Psychiatric Center, which required 20 to 40 burials a year, a decline in bequests, a drop in interest rates and other societal changes over the years.

The two state officials said other cemeteries across the state are also feeling a financial pinch. Vice-chair Eastman, a cemetery association member for about 30 years, said he did not want to see the local cemetery abandoned and turned over to the town. Mrs. Shirley Odomirok, an Ovid resident, expressed the same concern.