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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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DATE: 3/6/03  
TO: SYMMES ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
CC: NANCY T. GALKOWSKI, ACTING TOWN MANAGER  
FROM: CEMETERY COMMISSIONERS AND TERESA H. DEBENEDICTIS,   
ACTING DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS  
RE: ARLINGTON MEMORIAL GROVE

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Enclosed you will find a letter from the Cemetery Commissioners outlining the benefits to the Town of Arlington should a memorial grove be placed at the Symmes property. The Commissioners, acting as agents of the Town of Arlington, are prepared to become the stewards of a substantial area of the public use land at Symmes.

A cemetery is a perpetual entity and accordingly the Commissioners are the perfect group to be held responsible for keeping the open space at Symmes in excellent condition. In consideration for ownership of a portion of property at the Symmes site the Commissioners are prepared to offer \$100,000. This amount is predicated on the plan that was previously presented to the Committee for a columbarium on approximately four acres of land. The Commissioners are more than willing to discuss a smaller scale plan. We are most anxious to develop a plan that adds to the beauty of this one of a kind site.

## BENEFITS OF AN ARLINGTON MEMORIAL GROVE

1. Arlington is running out of cemetery space and due to a lack of suitable locations, a place for cremains would be a beneficial alternative for the town.
2. The open spaces that are seen in the cemetery are state required buffer zones around the wetland and brook areas and cannot be turned into burial lots.
3. The selectmen of Arlington have mandated a 50% allocation of open space for the Symmes property and a memorial grove can fit into those plans without requiring any of the space that is needed for development.
4. In the suggested area for the memorial grove, the cemetery can provide the path that is desired there and will be responsible for it's upkeep. It will also help to provide another way in and out of the area.
5. In the suggested area for the memorial grove, the cemetery will be responsible for it's clean out, as needed to provide for the upstart of the project and will also be responsible for replacing the area with more appropriate foliage and with evergreens that would also help to provide privacy for those who wish to use the area as not only a reflective area, but also as an area to walk, exercise, birdwatch, etc...
6. The cemetery is committed to keeping the area as natural as possible, but also to provide an inviting atmosphere to come reflect and enjoy nature.
7. An area specifically for cremains is not provided for anywhere else in town and therefore will not be duplicating services from another business source in town.
8. The cemetery brings in much revenue for the town on a weekly basis due to purchases and payments for services that are provided for by the cemetery. Currently lots cannot be sold on a pre-need basis due to the space constraints. The memorial grove would be able to sell pre-need niches and bring in more money that way and not lose business to other cemetery/columbariums in surrounding cities and town. These types of needs and services are not something that will fluctuate due to the economy. Every community and every family will eventually have this need.
9. The cemetery would slowly develop the area, only adding on as needed, and so it would be quite some time before we actually place 500 – 1000 niches as proposed by the SAC. This would help to keep the natural atmosphere of the area and really extend out this option for the residents of Arlington. We are also committed to spreading out the niches, keeping them back from the path and not having areas of congestion or clustering. If you recall the pictures of the more favorable type of niche with the tree in the middle of it and the ground cover around it, that 1 unit held 32 niches and would accommodate 64 cremains. We would start with 2 of those and wait until they were filled before adding anything else to the area.

10. Keep in mind that keeping the area as natural as possible also benefits the town and cemetery as there will be less maintenance and placement of cremains will also take less time. New employees should not be necessary to help with this type of expansion/offering.
11. Traffic would be at a minimum as we would provide services at the cemetery for any cremains , if desired, and then would arrange a time with the family that they would be able to go to the grove to visit their loved one later in the day. This avoids funeral processions and makes it easier on everyone to finalize a place for someone.
12. If this idea were to be accepted for the Symmes property, we would be able to also refurbish our chapel to help provide the services we want and it would also make the existing cemetery more attractive, which would also benefit other members of the community.
13. Cremain placement is becoming more and more popular as space runs out in communities. Even the Catholic Church, which used to be so against cremation , has loosened up on it's views and now is very welcoming of this form of burial and memorialization. These niches are selling very well and fast in other communities. It is also a community's responsibility to provide a place of burial for it's residents.
14. As depicted in the pictures, the niches will be so unobtrusive, that people at first may not even realize what they are walking by. It should also not infringe on any person's property or views.
15. As the cemetery does have some space left, we would be able to wait until construction has begun or even finished at Symmes so that we are not in the developer's way and then we would not be worried about our project being accidentally harmed in some way

We at Mount Pleasant Cemetery have appreciated your interest and attention to this idea. We hope that you can see the need in the community for what we propose and that you see our genuine interest in, and belief that, the area should be allowed to remain as natural as possible, yet be unobtrusively functional so as to provide our residents with a service that is desperately needed. Our circumstances become more dire with each passing year and we hope you will take our situation and make it your own. This is also a way for the town to retain some of Symmes land. We hope that as the SAC comes to the end of a very difficult job, you will recommend our proposed usage to the town meeting. It has been a pleasure to meet with you and watch you all work together for the common good of the town and we look forward to hearing from you. Thank you so much for you consideration up to this furthest of points.

Sincerely,  
Edward Murphy  
Bernard Smith  
Michele Hassler