

## **OAKWOOD CEMETERY**

304 LEXINGTON AVE., MOUNT KISCO, NEW YORK

April, 2011

### **OAKWOOD CEMETERY ANNOUNCES PLAN TO CONSTRUCT AND OPERATE A CREMATORY ON CEMETERY GROUNDS.**

OAKWOOD CEMETERY in Mount Kisco, New York is a not-for-profit, non-sectarian cemetery in operation since 1882. Throughout our more than 125 years of operation, Oakwood Cemetery has provided a necessary service to meet a long-recognized public need.

The Directors of Oakwood Cemetery are dedicated to maintaining and preserving a public cemetery. That includes remaining attentive to the needs and desires of both our plot holders and the community in providing for the respectful treatment of the dead. Whereas for many years ground burial was the predominant practice in American society, the acceptance of, and preference for cremation has been steadily increasing. In New York State, nearly one third of deaths are now followed by cremation. An increasing number of interments at Oakwood are of cremated remains.

Oakwood Cemetery recognizes the need to adapt to the increased acceptance of cremation and to provide this service to our plot holders. After more than 2½ years of study and planning, the Directors of Oakwood Cemetery recently filed with the Village of Mount Kisco an application for a building permit to construct a crematory on cemetery grounds.

The Village has responded by proposing a zoning code amendment that would prohibit operation of a crematory anywhere in Mount Kisco.

## **THE CREMATORY FACILITY**

To house the crematory, Oakwood proposes to construct a state-of-the-art building near its two existing buildings, the Superintendent's Residence/Office and the Maintenance Barn. The proposed building site has never been used for burial purposes, nor is it likely to be due to its sloping grade and proximity to the existing buildings. The crematory will occupy the main floor of the new building, and include an office, a small viewing room, a handicapped accessible rest room, and a cremation room sufficient to accommodate two cremation units, called retorts, all necessary ancillary equipment, and full entry of a transport vehicle. Regulations require that the cremation process be conducted in privacy. There is no provision for a chapel or similar space.

Two retorts are planned so that one will remain available in the event the other is down for maintenance or repair. Installing and maintaining redundant equipment is common, just as the Village has installed and maintained redundant filtration capacity in its water filtration plant.

A concrete slab will separate the crematory from the building's lower level, which will be partly below grade and provide needed storage and garage space for cemetery equipment. Utilizing the existing slope of the land, both levels will have on-grade access. Serving the two needs in one building instead of two significantly enhances the project's value without increasing the building footprint. The building's front façade will have a wood veneer designed to complement the adjacent wood maintenance barn and the Superintendent's residence. As proposed, the building meets or exceeds all zoning requirements for distance from property boundaries, height, size, and parking. Its visibility from the street is shielded by existing trees and buildings on the cemetery and neighboring properties.

The crematory will be owned and operated by Oakwood Cemetery, as required by law and the regulations of the New York State Division of Cemeteries. Oakwood plans to initially operate

the facility with existing cemetery staff, principally the cemetery Superintendent. Additional part-time staff will be added if needed. All operating staff will be NY State certified, as required by law. Cremations will take place during normal cemetery hours, when our staff is available.

Oakwood estimates the charge for a cremation will be approximately \$350, an amount projected to be sufficient to cover operating costs and provide a small surplus that will be applied to general cemetery operations. In conjunction with cremation services, Oakwood Cemetery expects to offer urns as well as interment services for cremated remains. Urns will be offered at a moderate markup over cost. Charges for interment of cremated remains will be at standard cemetery rates. A list of charges will be filed with the New York State Division of Cemeteries.

#### **THE CREMATORY WILL HAVE NO ADVERSE IMPACT**

Operating a crematory at Oakwood Cemetery will not cause any adverse impact upon the surrounding community. The cremation units, known as retorts, meet or exceed Department of Environmental Conservation emissions regulations, and produce no particulate emissions (smoke) or odors. Demand upon municipal services will not increase. There will be no measurable increase in traffic. A typical cremation case involves transport to and from the facility by only one Funeral Director vehicle. Occasionally, in accordance with some religious practices, some family members will attend, typically arriving and departing in one car.

#### **ADDITIONAL BENEFIT TO CEMETERY AND COMMUNITY**

Oakwood Cemetery, comprised of approximately 57 acres all located within Mount Kisco, is administered by a volunteer Board of Directors, and operates with a limited staff and a modest annual budget. Since the cemetery's creation more than 125 years ago, only about 6,000 of its

15,000 plots have been utilized, many for interment of cremated remains. While there is sufficient land available to meet expected demand for burial plots well into the future, Oakwood's Board of Directors believes the revenue generated by cemetery operations and investments will likely prove inadequate to sustain those operations. The cost of maintaining the cemetery's grounds, road network, buildings, and equipment continually increases while income remains nearly static.

The establishment and operation of a crematory will help ensure continued economic viability of the cemetery and prevent it from becoming a liability to the Village/Town of Mount Kisco. The reality is that maintenance and operation of our quiet, unobtrusive cemetery in the heart of the Village costs money, which Oakwood Cemetery must generate. Under New York State Law, the Village must assume maintenance and operation of the cemetery if it fails. Maintaining economic viability will also ensure long-term maintenance of existing graves and the availability of burial plots for future use.

With the addition of a crematory, Oakwood Cemetery will continue to operate much as it has for more than 125 years. The cemetery will continue to provide an essential public service to meet the needs of the living upon the death of a loved one, and will do so in a dignified and respectful manner. It will continue to tend its property so that it will remain a credit to the Village and not become a neglected blight. Oakwood will continue to host part of the Village's Memorial Day observances at the Veterans' Memorial, constructed on land provided to the American Legion at no cost. And cemetery property will continue to be available to serve as an emergency helicopter landing site. Oakwood Cemetery will remain a good corporate citizen, fulfilling its intended purpose, and assisting the community when and as it is able.

OAKWOOD CEMETERY

Howard G. Kensing, Jr., President