

logo not found or type unknown

Kingshill Cemetery to Reach Full Capacity in Six Months; Two Other Cemeteries Arrive at Limit

Government / **Published On November 10, 2020 04:10 AM /**

Maxiene K. Cabo **November 10, 2020**

Image not found or type unknown



ST. CROIX — The Kingshill Cemetery on St. Croix will arrive at full capacity on St. Croix in about six months, while the two historic cemeteries, one in the town of Christiansted and the other in the town of Frederiksted, have reached their limit and have since been closed, with all burials being directed to the Kingshill Cemetery.

That's according to the V.I. Dept. of Public Works Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program Director Shelton Shulterbrandt, speaking Monday during a Senate hearing in the Committee on Culture, Historic Preservation and Aging. The good news is Public Works has already engaged plans to extend the cemetery by 5 acres to the north.

Public Works is responsible for the establishment, maintenance, and improvement of the Virgin Islands public cemeteries. The department is in charge of laying out of grave plots, the digging and making up of graves, interment in graves and vaults, maintenance of graves, fees, charges, and means of defraying expenses for grave plots, among other responsibilities.

Increased fees

Mr. Shulterbrandt said fees are collected for burial plot permits and tomb construction. Previously an individual's contribution toward the maintenance of the cemetery was \$16-32 per burial plot, which was good for 20 years with a renewal option.

"We have seen this as an issue because there is very few opportunities to do major improvements to the cemeteries if for 20 years we are only able to get around \$32 to maintain each plot," said Mr. Shulterbrandt. Therefore, DPW decided to raise the cost of burial plot fees effective September 1, 2020, territory-wide to \$250 for weekday burials, and \$500 for weekend and holiday burials.

Asked by Senator Dwayne DeGraff how the hefty increase in fees would improve the cemeteries, Mr. Shulterbrandt said, "Generally we are looking at a better-looking cemetery aesthetically in terms of beautification, uniformity, being able to better maintain and manage it in terms of what is necessary in having these cemeteries being brought up to a better standard than they are currently being maintained."

Hurricane Damage to cemeteries

On the island of St. Croix, there are three public cemeteries: the Christiansted Public Cemetery, Frederiksted Public Cemetery, and the Kingshill Public Cemetery. During his testimony, Mr. Shulterbrandt said the cemeteries sustained damage after hurricanes Irma and Maria ravaged the territory in 2017, and that DPW has plans to improve the burial facilities territory-wide.

Relative to the Christiansted and Frederiksted facilities, Mr. Shulterbrandt said the cemeteries' walls sustained damage from the 2017 storms and are in need of repair. He added that DPW would be developing a scope of work to reconstruct pathways, trim and remove damaged trees, and repair broken tombs. The scope of work will also include upgrades to the onsite cemetery offices, bathroom facilities, and security gates.

The Kingshill Public Cemetery, which is the main cemetery on St. Croix, was initially designed to house 6,800 burials when it opened in 1980. However, when the annex to the cemetery was completed in 2012, it increased the capacity of burial lots by approximately 2000. Mr. Shulterbrandt expressed to the committee that Kingshill is expected to reach full capacity within six months, but DPW has engaged in plans to expand an additional 5 acres to the north of the current site.

In addition to hurricane damage sustained by the Christiansted and Frederiksted cemeteries, the Kingshill Cemetery's chapel was destroyed by Hurricane Maria and was rendered unusable. "We are looking at hopefully a scope of work over \$300,000 worth of repairs," Mr. Shulterbrandt said of the chapel. "Everything has to be refurbished; it's just a shell of a building right now."

Part of the work projected to be performed on the Kingshill Cemetery is repairs to its parameter walls, better lighting and security upgrades.

Though the Christiansted and Frederiksted cemeteries have been closed due to the lack of space, Public Works is allowing residents with previously purchased plots to conduct burials on the plots

of previously interred loved ones.

© Viconsortium 2025