



Edna Wells Handy
Commissioner

**CANARSIE CEMETERY OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT
TRANSFERRED TO CYPRESS HILLS CEMETERY**

Sale yields an estimated \$350,000 annually in reduced expenses to the City and preserves the cemetery's use as a non-sectarian burial ground open to all.

1 Centre Street
17th Floor
New York, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 30, 2011

(212) 669 7111 tel
(212) 669 8992 fax

Today Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) Commissioner Edna Wells Handy, and Council Member Lewis Fidler announced the sale of Canarsie Cemetery to Cypress Hills Cemetery. The sale yielded an estimated \$350,000 annually in reduced expenses to the City, and preserves the cemetery's use as a non-sectarian burial ground open to all. The cemetery will retain the name 'Canarsie Cemetery.'

Canarsie Cemetery was transferred to Cypress Hills for the sale price of \$50,000. The transfer establishes a Permanent Maintenance Fund of \$1 million to help ensure the cemetery's care in perpetuity. Consisting of 13 acres, including 4.5 acres of undeveloped property, the transfer of the cemetery will enable the development of this area for cemetery purposes to meet the expanding needs of the community for more burial grounds. In addition, the deed contains a 20-foot height restriction on new structures in order to maintain the historic character of the land and the low-rise residential nature of the neighborhood.

A stipulation of the sale preserves its use as a non-sectarian burial ground for persons of all races, faiths, and ethnic origins as authorized in Chapter 485 of the Laws of New York of 1998. This special State-enabling legislation ensures that the transference of the long-term operation of the burial ground to a private owner will not change the fundamental nature of and rules governing access to the cemetery.

In May 2009, a request for proposals (RFP) for the acquisition and operation of Canarsie Cemetery by a New York State not-for-profit cemetery operator under the jurisdiction of the New York State Department of State, Division of Cemeteries was issued. A Community Advisory Committee made recommendations with respect to the RFP prior to publication. The Community Advisory Committee included former Assembly Member Frank Seddio; Ira Kluger, Co-President of the Canarsie Historical Society; and Neal Duncan, President of the United Canarsie South Civic Association.

Throughout the process, DCAS worked with Council Member Lewis Fidler, along with other elected officials and stakeholders in the Canarsie community to complete the sale. Since being selected, Cypress Hills has partnered with DCAS on community outreach and collaborated to obtain approval from the New York State Cemetery Board. Approval was obtained from the New York State Supreme Court on March 3, 2011, with subsequent City Council and Mayoral approval on June 14 and August 17.

"This sale underscores the core missions and expertise of the parties involved - Cypress Hills



Cemetery is a well-regarded and experienced non-profit, non-sectarian cemetery operator. The agreement ensures the protection of Canarsie's historical significance, and its special place in the history of Brooklyn when it was a city," said Edna Wells Handy, Commissioner of DCAS. "I'd like to thank Council Member Fidler for leading the community outreach effort to bring this initiative to completion."

City Council Member Lewis Fidler said, "The City's cemetery business has now reached a dead end. But it's a good end because it takes taxpayers off the hook for hundreds of thousands of dollars per year that the operation was losing, allows the cemetery operators to actually begin opening additional graves, and will be sensitive to the history contained there."

"Cypress Hills Cemetery is excited about the acquisition of Canarsie Cemetery from the City of New York," said John Desmond, CEO of Cypress Hills Cemetery. "We plan to develop it into a successful non-sectarian, not-for-profit cemetery and provide much needed and affordable burial space, with a sense of dignity, for its diverse surrounding communities and all residents of New York City. We plan to work closely with the community and local officials, in performing a complete rehabilitation, to develop Canarsie Cemetery into a beautiful park-like setting while maintaining all of its historical significance."

Borough President Markowitz said, "Not only do we have an obligation to look out for everyone still living in our borough, but those of blessed memory who deserve nothing less than a dignified burial place. The sale of Canarsie Cemetery to Cypress Hills Cemetery is good news for the survival of this historic property, as well as the improvements needed to make it worthy for future generations that want to spend their eternity in Brooklyn."

"As a lifelong Canarsie resident who has a number of family members buried in Canarsie Cemetery, I am pleased that the Cemetery's operation will now be handled by such a qualified group of professionals," said Frank Seddio, a Community Advisory Committee member. "The operation of this cemetery by a private vendor, who has a long history of experience in cemetery operations, is a welcome change," he added.

About Cypress Hills Cemetery

Cypress Hills Cemetery was founded on November 21, 1848. It is chartered by New York State as a non-profit, non-sectarian, membership corporation and was the first cemetery in Greater New York to be organized under a law which is internationally recognized as "America's contribution to the civilized burial of the dead."

Contact:

Julianne Cho 212 386-0238
Department of Citywide Administrative Services

Reeves Eisen 718 241-9330
Council Member Fidler's Office

John Desmond 718 277-2900
Cypress Hills Cemetery