

July 1, 2017

Ms. Rose Harvey, Commissioner
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation
Albany, NY 12238

Ref: Hebrew Free Burial Association Grant Application

Dear Ms. Harvey;

I am writing to express my firm support of the Hebrew Free Burial Association's Environmental Protection Fund Grant application in order to preserve historic Silver Lake Cemetery.

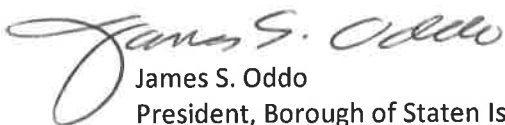
Silver Lake Cemetery, at 926 Victory Boulevard, has been in existence since 1892, and when it opened it was planned for 4,000 burials. By 1909, more than 13,600 burials had taken place – over half of them children – and the cemetery was closed.

Currently, the cemetery is open to vandalism and further decay; some remains are just 12 inches from the surface. Opportunistic trees, vandalism and the course of nature have combined to shift remains away from their burial spots; overturn headstones; and cause most headstones to disappear altogether. Poor drainage means that areas are flooded after heavy rains, creating small ponds.

Silver Lake Cemetery is a key part of Staten Island history and of the history of New York Jewry. It is a landmark, anchoring Staten Islanders to their community. It is also on the National Register of Historic Places, testifying to its importance, and helps to educate young people about their history and the history of New York City: some 1,000 high school students and Staten Island community members participate in clean-up projects every year.

Once again, I reiterate my strong support for the Hebrew Free Burial Association's grant application for the urgent restoration of Staten Island's important and historic Silver Lake Cemetery. Thank you for your kind attention.

Sincerely,


James S. Oddo
President, Borough of Staten Island

