

**REPORT OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

**STUDY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF A STATE VETERANS CEMETERY
AT HAMPTON ROADS**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



SENATE DOCUMENT NO. 6

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
RICHMOND
1999**



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Veterans' Affairs

DONALD W. DUNCAN
DIRECTOR

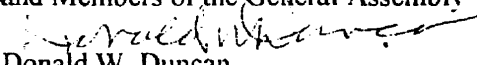
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November 30, 1998

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable James S. Gilmore, III, Governor of Virginia
and Members of the General Assembly

FROM: 
Donald W. Duncan

SUBJECT: Study for Recommendation of a Second Veterans Cemetery

Our department was mandated to perform a feasibility study to determine the need for a second veterans cemetery in the Hampton Roads area by Senate Joint Resolution 111.

No money was appropriated for performing the study. Therefore, we completed the study by using agency resources under the supervision of our cemetery superintendent of the Amelia Veterans Cemetery.

Since our completion of the study, Congress has passed a bill that would allow the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) to reimburse the state for 100% of the cost of construction. Equipment purchases will also be reimbursed by the USDVA. Land costs must be borne by the states and will not be reimbursed.

The Commonwealth will be responsible for the annual cost of the cemetery's operation. We have requested the Department of Planning and Budget to include money for the purchase of land in the administration's budget.

DWD:bt

Enclosure

Senate Joint Resolution 111

**Study of the Establishment of a State Veterans Cemetery
at Hampton Roads**

submitted by

Virginia Department of Veterans' Affairs

**Donald W. Duncan
Director**

November 30, 1998

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CURRENT AVAILABILITY OF VETERANS CEMETERIES

Currently there are four veterans cemeteries that are open to provide burials for the Commonwealth. They are:

Arlington National Cemetery operated by the US Army

Culpeper National Cemetery operated by US Veterans' Affairs

Quantico National Cemetery operated by US Veterans' Affairs

Virginia Veterans Cemetery operated by Virginia Department of Veterans' Affairs.

The closest Veterans Cemetery to the Hampton Roads region is the Virginia Veterans Cemetery at Amelia. The distance from Virginia Beach is about 130 miles with a travel time of at least 2 ½ hours.

As stated above, Arlington, Quantico and Culpeper national cemeteries and the Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Amelia, VA, presently serve Virginia's veterans. Burial in Arlington is restricted and is therefore, unavailable, with the exception of columbarium burials, which is not practical for most veterans in the Commonwealth. In 1993, the Hampton National Cemetery was closed to new burials. With the closure of Hampton, the only remaining cemeteries accessible for burial are located in Northern Virginia and Amelia, all of which are impractical for the majority of veterans living in the greater Hampton Roads Area.

Presently, there are 684,300 veterans residing in the Commonwealth with 173,700 veterans residing in the greater Hampton Roads area. 60,820 of these veterans are age 60 or older. An analysis of the number of veterans age 55+ and veterans age 65+ reveals concentrated pockets of these population groups throughout Virginia. These age groups are good predictors of current and future need because this subgroup demonstrates more population stability because of the typical armed forces retirement at age 55. The majority of concentrated areas of veterans are in and around counties with existing military bases, VA hospitals, and state and federal nursing home and domiciliary facilities. These conditions are all present in the greater Hampton Roads area that indicates a stability of the veteran population age 55 and greater in this area of the state. Consequently, the number of veterans in the Hampton Roads area, along with the high percentage of veterans age 60 or older and the stability of this population level establishes the need for a state veterans cemetery in this area.

This greater Hampton Roads Area is centered in Suffolk with a radius of 75 miles, which extends to Petersburg and Northampton County on the Eastern Shore.

The largest concentration of veterans is in Virginia Beach, Norfolk, and Chesapeake, followed by Newport News and Hampton. The veteran population in this region represents over one quarter of the total veterans throughout the Commonwealth.

All information on veteran population was provided by the US Department of Veterans' Affairs, dated July 1st, 1998.

LAND REQUIREMENTS

Of the 173,700 Veterans, it is anticipated that 15% or 25,950 will utilize a state veterans cemetery. Using the National Cemetery System guidelines of 660 graves per acre for a 5' x 10' plot, we would require 45 (43.25) acres for burials, employing the double depth method. In addition, we would require at least half that amount for buildings, roadways, and a buffer area. The total acreage needed would therefore be at least 65 acres. The area south of the James River was selected because of the following factors:

- availability of large tracts of property
- cost of land
- a larger veteran population in the Tidewater area.
- accessibility from the Peninsula area using the James River Bridge and I-664 (Monitor-Merrimac).

One of the significant problems in locating a suitable site in the Tidewater area is the presence of a high water table and comparatively poor drainage in the region. This makes it difficult to establish a cemetery closer to the larger blocks of veterans. Numerous sites were viewed and many were found to be unacceptable. Cost of land ranges from \$3,500 to over \$10,000 per acre in that region, with the cost generally going down away from the James River and more congested areas. The site requires easy access from main highways and public transportation and has local utilities available for use.

AREA RECOMMENDATIONS

Sites recommended for the cemetery are as follows:

Off routes 10/32 North of Suffolk from the US Route 58 bypass extending North to Benns Church in Isle of Wight County (Chuckatuck area)

Kenyon Road which is North of US Route 58 in the Holland section of Suffolk

Off US Route 460 extending Northwest from US Route 58 bypass in Suffolk to Windsor in Isle of Wight County

Land is currently available in these areas but may not be in the next two years. There is also suitable land available at less cost in Southampton County near Franklin. The traveling distance would increase for the major areas of veteran concentration. Average travel time from Norfolk to Franklin is about forty minutes.

ESTIMATED COST

The estimated cost to build a new veterans cemetery is:

Land purchase for 65-acre site -	\$650,000
Construction	\$2,500,000
Project Inspection	\$100,000
Architects Design and Plan	\$250,000
Operating Equipment	\$275,000
Administrative	<u>\$15,000</u>
	\$3,790,000

These figures were taken from the construction of the Virginia Veterans Cemetery at Amelia and reflect inflation of equipment. The land cost reflects the price at \$10,000 per acre.

Currently, the National Cemetery System Grants Program will fund 50% of construction costs and internal equipment. This equates to \$1,250,000. However, the House of Representatives passed a bill on August 3, 1998 to fund 100% of construction costs of cemeteries as well as original equipment costs. The bill is now before the Senate and is expected to pass. The bill does not allow for purchase of land, however, or the reimbursement of the purchase of land. Therefore, the Commonwealth must purchase the land in any event.

The obligation on the part of the Commonwealth will be operation of the cemetery and to provide certain funds for design and construction. These funds will be necessary initially for timely payment of design and construction costs. The amount expended will be reimbursed by the Federal government.

Anticipated revenue from burials/plot allowance is \$14,400 per year. This is based on an average of 8 burials per month. Projected annual operating budget for cemetery is \$155,000 which includes staffing and various supplies such as fuel products, agricultural products, small equipment items and routine office supplies.

RECOMMENDATION

Due to the high number of veterans age 60 and older living in the greater Hampton Roads area, and the likelihood that the population level will remain stable, along with the great distance they currently have to travel to be interred in a veterans cemetery, and the absence of a veterans cemetery in the area, it is recommended that a new state veterans cemetery be established. It is further recommended that it be located in the Suffolk/Isle of Wight area, due to accessibility, cost, and availability of land. Minimum land requirements would be a 65-acre site.

More time will be needed to actively search for a suitable site within the recommended area and to offer a contract for the desired land.

**COMPARITIVE DISTANCES
TO EXISTING VETERANS CEMETERIES**

ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

Hampton to Arlington – 180 miles

Portsmouth to Arlington – 195 miles

Virginia Beach to Arlington – 210 miles

VIRGINIA VETERANS CEMETERY AT AMELIA

Hampton to Amelia – 116 miles

Portsmouth to Amelia – 109 miles

Virginia Beach to Amelia – 130 miles

QUANTICO NATIONAL CEMETERY

Hampton to Quantico – 150 miles

Portsmouth to Quantico – 165 miles

Virginia Beach to Quantico – 180 miles

CULPEPER NATIONAL CEMETERY

Hampton to Culpeper – 162 miles

Portsmouth to Culpeper – 176 miles

Virginia Beach to Culpeper – 190 miles

(as supplied by VDOT)

**VETERAN AGE (40-80+) BY
CITY AND COUNTY**

CITIES SOUTH OF THE JAMES RIVER

	<u>40-49</u>	<u>50-59</u>	<u>60-69</u>	<u>70-79</u>	<u>80+</u>
CHESAPEAKE	4,310	4,390	2,900	2,110	460
COLONIAL HEIGHTS	420	480	560	560	70
EMPORIA	60	70	140	200	10
FRANKLIN	120	130	160	190	40
HOPEWELL	380	560	520	700	110
NORFOLK	3,970	4,020	3,730	4,330	1,260
PETERSBURG	660	860	870	1,030	410
PORTSMOUTH	1,720	2,040	2,010	2,000	510
SUFFOLK	960	1,190	1,010	830	200
VIRGINIA BEACH	<u>9,660</u>	<u>9,850</u>	<u>6,100</u>	<u>5,460</u>	<u>960</u>
Subtotal	22,260	23,590	18,000	17,410	4,030

COUNTIES

GREENSVILLE	90	140	170	140	0
ISLE OF WIGHT	470	630	600	350	40
PRINCE GEORGE	580	820	480	250	70
SOUTHAMPTON	240	360	360	270	40
SURRY	120	70	130	60	10
SUSSEX	<u>120</u>	<u>160</u>	<u>180</u>	<u>170</u>	<u>10</u>
Subtotal	1,620	2,180	1,920	1,240	170

CITIES NORTH OF THE JAMES RIVER

	<u>40-49</u>	<u>50-59</u>	<u>60-69</u>	<u>70-79</u>	<u>80+</u>
HAMPTON	2,860	3,730	2,850	2,270	370
NEWPORT NEWS	3,480	3,260	2,820	2,090	410
POQUOSON	300	430	240	120	80
WILLIAMSBURG	<u>80</u>	<u>120</u>	<u>190</u>	<u>260</u>	<u>170</u>
Subtotal	6,720	7,540	6,100	4,740	1,030

COUNTIES

CHARLES CITY	100	150	150	90	20
GLOUCESTER	700	810	620	500	130
JAMES CITY	770	1,180	900	1,020	240
MATTHEWS	170	210	330	220	60
MIDDLESEX	160	180	360	410	80
NEW KENT	310	350	330	130	0
NORTHAMPTON	130	260	300	380	70
YORK	<u>1,060</u>	<u>1,400</u>	<u>1,050</u>	<u>560</u>	<u>60</u>
Subtotal	3,400	4,540	4,040	1,480	660
TOTALS	34,000	37,850	30,060	24,870	5890

VETERAN POPULATION BY CITY AND COUNTY

CITIES SOUTH OF THE JAMES RIVER

CHESAPEAKE	18,220
COLONIAL HTS.	2,330
EMPORIA	530
FRANKLIN	740
HOPEWELL	2,740
NORFOLK	23,580
PETERSBURG	4,580
PORTSMOUTH	10,460
SUFFOLK	5,020
VIRGINIA BEACH	43,610
Subtotal	111,810

COUNTIES

GREENSVILLE	650
ISLE OF WIGHT	2,480
PRINCE GEORGE	2,810
SOUTHAMPTON	1,410
SURRY	500
SUSSEX	<u>770</u>
Subtotal	8,620

CITIES NORTH OF THE JAMES RIVER

HAMPTON	15,780
NEWPORT NEWS	16,630
POQUOSON	1,280
WILLIAMSBURG	<u>980</u>
Subtotal	34,670

COUNTIES

CHARLES CITY	600
GLOUCESTER	3,420
JAMES CITY	4,790
MATTHEWS	1,030
MIDDLESEX	1,290
NEW KENT	1,310
NORTHHAMPTON	1,260
YORK	<u>4,900</u>
Subtotal	18,600

TOTAL VETERAN POPULATION IN AREA

173,700