

## **Proposal to the Town Council of Alexandria, Tennessee**

### **Subject: Historical Recognition, Restoration, and Commemoration of Alexandria Cemeteries Historic District**

To the Mayor and Alexandria Town Council,

We write to you today with a heartfelt and urgent request—one rooted in our shared responsibility to honor the past, preserve truth, and uplift the voices of those too long silenced.

Nestled quietly in the landscape of Alexandria, the Seay Chapel, and adjoining Seay Cemetery and Eastview Cemetery are more than historic—they are sacred and hold the collective memory of Alexandria, as well as the oldest members of our community.

Both the Seay Chapel and African American cemetery are in dire need of help. Within the Seay Cemetery lie the remains of an estimated **300 individuals, all African American**, including **many who were formerly enslaved**.

This is not simply a matter of preservation—it is an opportunity for recognition, dignity, and historical justice.

We respectfully propose a three-part initiative to commemorate and restore this profoundly significant site and the first of many renewal projects to come.

#### **1. Application for a Historical Plaque for Alexandria Cemeteries Historic District**

The Seay Chapel once served as a vital place of worship, community gathering, and spiritual strength for African American families in Alexandria. We propose pursuing a Tennessee Historical Commission marker to formally acknowledge the cemeteries and chapel's historic importance and to preserve its legacy for generations to come.

#### **2. Placement of a Memorial Tombstone for the Unmarked Graves**

Many of those buried in Seay Cemetery lie in **unmarked graves**—their names lost, but their lives no less meaningful. We propose the placement of a single, dignified memorial tombstone or monument inscribed with a message such as “In Memory of Those Known Only to God,” in honor of those whose final resting place lacks a marker.

To ensure transparency and responsible management, **all funds raised for the tombstone will be paid directly to Bass & Avant Funeral Homes** and **held in trust** until the project is complete.

#### **3. Community-Led Clean-Up and Restoration of Seay Cemetery**

We propose organizing a community-led clean-up and restoration effort to respectfully clear overgrowth, maintain pathways, and preserve existing headstones. This is a solemn act of reverence—an opportunity for our community to come together and tend to the resting place of those who endured lives of hardship, service, and strength in the earliest chapters of Alexandria’s history.

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### **Estimated Timeline: 24 Months**

We anticipate a timeline of **24 months** to complete the full scope of this project, which allows time for **fundraising**, coordination, and careful restoration. Each phase will be approached with thoughtfulness and community involvement, especially with those who’s ancestors and heritage are represented.

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This initiative seeks to ensure that the stories and sacrifices of Alexandria’s African American citizens—**including those who lived and died in bondage**—are no longer hidden in overgrown fields or erased by time. By marking this site, restoring its grounds, and educating others about its significance, we honor not only their memory, but our commitment to truth and dignity.

As you know the Eastview Cemetery along with both the Black Cemetery and Seay Chapel are all on the National Register of Historic Places as one unit. After viewing the entire area, the Chapel building and Seay Cemetery are by far in the worst condition and this is where we want the start first in helping Alexandria care of the property. Plans will be made after this project is completed to research and work on the Eastview Cemetery as well.

Thank you for considering this proposal. We welcome the opportunity to discuss these plans further and explore how we might work together to preserve and elevate this sacred place in Alexandria’s history.

Yours truly,

Friends of the Alexandria Cemeteries Historic District

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