

*"Pennsylvania's Most Beautiful Burial Estate"*



My name is Geoffrey Behrens and I am a resident of Blair County, and I am also the Vice President and General Manager of Alto-Reste Park Cemetery Association, Inc of 109 Alto Reste Park in Allegheny Township. I thank the board of commissioners for the opportunity to speak as both a resident and a business owner in our county.

On January 7th, 2025, Alto-Reste Park received a letter from the Blair County Commissioners office that included an offer to purchase a 77 acre portion of land owned by us, and requested a response in 3 days. The county stated in that letter that it wants to use this land to construct a new prison and claimed in the offer that our land was "necessary for the project". On January 17th, 2025, the Board of Directors of Alto-Reste Park declined the offer.

In the meeting of the Blair County Commissioners held a month ago, they discussed three potential sites for the new prison and, even though we made it clear in our response that we were not interested in selling our land, they stated in that meeting that our property is still the preferred site to build the new prison.

When R.P. Good founded Alto-Reste Park in 1925, he promised the citizens of Blair County that our grounds would provide a place of peace for generations. He committed to our community that we would have burial grounds at Alto-Reste Park that were permanent and perpetually maintained, and designed our property to offer comfort and beauty to those experiencing unexplainable pain and sadness. R.P. intentionally chose this land, with the knowledge that preparing for the future was critical to fulfilling his promise. Alto-Reste Park is now being led by the third and fourth generations of our family, and our commitment to the community remains the same. Accordingly, all of the property owned by Alto-Reste Park is vital to our sustainability, and this particular 77 acre portion of our land is our most viable expansion area, and continued expansion of our park is not far away. Having our land taken by the county would severely limit, if not completely hinder, our ability to operate in the future.

If the County Commissioners intend to acquire our land, we would ask that they consider the adverse impact that it would have. Impact on the over 20,000 families that have entrusted us with the care of their loved one's final resting place, impact on future generations ability to find the same peace and beauty that Alto-Reste Park has always provided, and impact on our family's promise to this community that we have worked so hard to uphold over the last 100 years.

Our family agrees that we need to upgrade our county prison, but doing it at the expense of us and the families that have chosen Alto-Reste Park, who are also owners of our land, and hindering the ability to serve our community now and in the future, doesn't seem like the best way to solve the problem. There are other properties that could be utilized that do not adversely affect businesses or grieving families in our county.

We appreciate this community allowing us to serve them, and we hope that the county commissioners will consider the impact to our area families before proceeding down the road of doing irreparable harm to not only our family's commitment, but, more importantly, to the community that we promised to serve. Thank you for allowing me the time to comment on this matter.