

Hart Island Project: Access to the NYC Public Cemetery Burial Records

The Advocacy Committee of the Archivists Round Table of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (ART) supports the [Hart Island Project](#) in its effort to provide visibility and access to the New York City public cemetery on Hart's Island. In particular, ART agrees that the Department of Corrections should make their electronic database of people buried at Hart's Island since 1977 available on its website, and will submit written testimony in favor of open records at the upcoming New York City Council Committee on Fire and Criminal Justice Services hearing on Thursday, September 27, 2012.

The City Cemetery on Hart's Island occupies 101 acres in the Long Island Sound on the eastern edge of New York City. It is the largest tax-funded cemetery in the world. Over 850,000 individuals are buried at the City Cemetery.

Currently, citizens must contact Sharman Stein, Deputy Commissioner of the Office of Public Information for the City of New York Department of Correction (DOC) to visit Hart Island. The DOC restricts visitation to those who can document the burial of a family member buried on Hart Island, and there is no written policy as to who is allowed to visit.

The Hart Island Project maintains an [online database of public burial records](#) dating from 1980–2010 that were obtained through New York State Freedom of Information Law. The remainder of the public burial records (1883–1980) are located in various repositories, including the [Municipal Archives](#). Without centralized public access to these burial records, locating the death certificate of a deceased family member can be an impossible task.

The New York City Council Committee on Fire and Criminal Justice Services will hold a hearing on Thursday, September 27, 2012 at 1pm in the 14th floor Committee Room at 250 Broadway, in Manhattan, on the following two bills:

Int. No. 803

By Council Members Crowley, Oddo, Vacca, Lander, Cabrera, Dromm, Eugene, Ferreras, Foster, James, Koo, Koppell, Koslowitz, Levin,

Palma, Rose, Williams, Wills, Weprin, Mendez, Mark-Viverito and Halloran.

A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring the Department of Correction to make its electronic database of people buried at Hart's Island, since 1977, available on its website.

Int. No. 804

By Council Members Crowley, Oddo, Vacca, Lander, Brewer, Cabrera, Dromm, Eugene, Foster, Jackson, James, Koo, Koppell, Koslowitz, Levin, Palma, Rose, Wills, Mendez, Mark-Viverito and Halloran.

A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring the Department of Correction to put its Hart's Island visitation policy in writing, post it on its website, and make it available to anyone who requests a copy.

Hearings are open to the public. Interested ART members are encouraged to attend. If you wish to testify, please contact hearings@council.nyc.ny.us

If you would like to receive copies of these bills or advanced copies of testimony, please contact:

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