

# **South Roxana Police Department investigating plot problems at Wanda Cemetery**

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
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**SOUTH ROXANA** - In an unusual move, the South Roxana Police Department has issued a press release regarding an ongoing investigation.

In the release, South Roxana Police Chief Bob Coles said "multiple inquiries" to the department have been made regarding the Wanda Cemetery. He then subsequently opened an investigation after receiving a complaint regarding the cemetery, the release stated, and discovered the cemetery was allegedly reselling plots already purchased. According to the release, Coles said this may have occurred multiple times over the last decade.

Coles said the issue occurred when a South Roxana village trustee discovered her husband's plot had been resold by the cemetery - after he had passed.

"When somebody dies, that is not the time they need to find out their plot has been resold," he said.

To make matters more interesting, that plot had been sold to the trustee by former Village Board President and Wanda Cemetery Supervisor Tom Flemming. Flemming was appointed to that position by Madison County Board Member Helen Hawkins. Coles said the village trustee purchased the plot in 2012 and her husband passed in 2017.

The supervisors of the cemetery are cooperating with authorities, Coles said, but the release states they were aware of this issue, and were unsure of how many more times it could have possibly occurred.

"They said they have no idea how many times this could have happened," Coles said. "I asked them if they have a system, and he said they only knew if a plot was taken if someone was buried there."

As many as 6,000 plots exist within the cemetery, which is located at 915 Indiana Ave. in South Roxana.

Because of this, the department issued the unusual release, which is not common practice for law enforcement, so members of the public who may have plots there can see if they may have been a victim of this practice. Coles said the practice may have gone undetected for as long as 15 years.

Coles has taken the issue to the Illinois Comptroller's Office, which handles cases like this involving cemeteries.

The Wanda Cemetery can be reached at (618) 254-2007, according to the release, but calls from Riverbender.com since the release was issued have only been met with a busy signal.