

## **HB 369 offers light at the end of tunnel**

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There is a House Bill currently sitting in committee which if passed would allow Kentucky cities the authority to free up millions of dollars worth of perpetual care monies collected over the years.

If the bill passes the legislature it could mean good news for smaller cities like Russellville who carry a deficit in their cemetery department each year because its expenditures outweigh its revenue.

The current law (KRS 367.952), requires that all sellers of cemetery lots place 20 percent of the gross selling price of each grave into a trust fund - or perpetual care. The interest income from that fund currently could be used for general care and maintenance of the cemetery but the principle could not be touched.

The fund was established to ensure that monies would be available to maintain the cemetery if the owner of the facility went out of business but it is very unlikely that a city would go out of business.

Russellville Mayor Gene Zick is excited about **HB 369**. "We have been asking for relief from that restriction for along time," Zick said. "It means that we would get some relief in our general fund, which bares all the cost of maintaining and operating the cemeteries. We have been scraping along with our equipment for years."

Zick said the city has been hard pressed to make necessary and wanted improvements to its cemeteries. He said he wants to put lights in Maple Grove, Russellville's largest of four cemeteries, but really can not afford to right now with the general fund being constrained the way it is with high pensions and medical costs.

According to records Russellville was over \$100,000 in its expenditures three years ago compared to its revenue in the cemetery department. The largest burden comes from payroll, benefits and equipment.

There is an array of sponsors for the Bill, but some say its the Kentucky League of Cities who is pressing for its success.