



Staff Report

Report To: Dan Best, Chief Administrative Officer
From: **Rebekah Msuya-Collison, Director of Legislative Services/Clerk**
Date: August 12 2019
Report: CL 18-2019
Subject: Exeter Public Cemetery - Update

Recommendations:

That South Huron Council receive the report re Exeter Public Cemetery Update; and

That Council authorize the following changes on a go forward basis:

- Contracting out of opening and closing for full burials
- Discontinuation of winter burials from November 15-April 15

Purpose:

For Information

Background and Analysis:

Brief History

In 1864, a five acres tract of land was acquired for the Exeter Union Burying Ground. The size of the cemetery increased slowly until 1924 when Council bought a further 9 ³/₄ acres to make it the size it is today, eighteen acres.

In the early years, the operation of the Exeter Union Burying Ground was overseen by a Board of Trustees, but in 1903 the town of Exeter took over the operation of the cemetery. In 1933 the operation and management of the cemetery was entrusted to the Exeter Cemetery Board until 1997 when

Exeter Council assumed the decision making authority. The Exeter Cemetery is currently operated by the Municipality of South Huron.

This report:

- i. Provides a brief overview of the Exeter Public Cemetery;
- ii. Provides a brief summary of the regulatory framework that governs the operation of the Cemetery;
- iii. Summarizes and reports on current status and initiatives at the Exeter Public Cemetery;
- iv. Next steps - Cemetery Master Plan;

Exeter Public Cemetery has been an important cultural landmark and repository of South Huron's history since its inception in April of 1864. Over the last 155 years, Exeter Public Cemetery and its caretakers have provided quiet and respectful end of life care for citizens and their families who live in or have links to South Huron.

The Cemetery includes a cemetery office/service building, mausoleum and 3 columbariums. If room permits, the mausoleum also serves as a winter storage vault for other cemeteries. Landscape, laneways and trees have been added to enhance the grounds and in 1994, a memorial tree program was started. The third Sunday in July is set aside for Decoration Day.

Current burial hours are Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, no interments are to take place on a Statutory Holiday. Cemetery Administration hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays. The Cemetery grounds are staffed as follows from May to September:

- 1 Full-time operator
- 2 Seasonal Summer Students

The Cemetery is operated under the Community Services Department and the administration is overseen by Legislative Services. Legislative Services is responsible for:

- Administering sale or re-purchase of burial lots, cremation lots, columbaria niches and flowerbeds
- Preparing contracts, manage and maintain cemetery records of all interments;

- Customer service directly with families and funeral home professionals
- Assisting public researching genealogy

Community Services Department is responsible for:

- Maintenance and care of the 18-acre cemetery
- Opening and closing graves for the most part, arranged and undertaken with the involvement of funeral homes, however with the increase in the number of people selecting cremation, the incidence of staff working directly with families that have opted not to retain the services of a funeral home for these arrangements, has increased;
 - Opening sites for a full internment includes marking the site, laying boards, excavation and service preparation.
 - Closing sites for full internment includes pumping water (depending on the time of year), covering site, packing site, sod, watering.
- Cleaning and general maintenance of all buildings/equipment.
 - Currently there is a number of pieces of small equipment, a tractor, all terrain utility vehicle, mower, two trailers and a truck.
- Grounds keeping including:
 - Arboriculture, planting, care and management of trees including tree program;
 - Planting/weeding/watering of roughly 1600 flower beds 2-3 times per week
 - turf management, grass cutting and line trimming;
 - litter removal and spring clean-up.
- Installation of foundations for monuments;
- Installation of flat markers and corner blocks;
- Winter storage for other cemeteries that do not do winter burials or for burials that are deferred at the request of the family

Available Sites as of July 30, 2019

Grave Section	Total Available Sites
1 grave	115

2 grave	1245
3 grave	166
4 grave	934
Cremation Section	255
Columbariums (3)	47
No Vault Section - **Requirement to have no vault section alternative under Act.	12

Regulatory Framework

Under the *Funeral, Burials and Cremation Services Act 2002*, the municipality is responsible for the management and administration, customer service, maintenance and development of the Exeter Public Cemetery grounds and buildings. By-Law 57-2016 under the authority of the *Municipal Act* and *Funeral, Burials and Cremation Services Act* governs the regulation and management of the cemetery. The Cemetery By-Law includes sections that direct:

- Interment Rights- The sale of a lot at need or for future use via an Interment Rights Contract
- Interment Procedures- The administrative rules and conditions that must be met prior to performing an interment including Interment Rights Holder verification, and the authorization and payment via a signed services contract by the verified interment rights holder to open the grave and perform an interment, inurnment, entombment or scattering
- Disinterment Procedures- The administrative rules and regulatory framework that must be met prior to performing a disinterment, including the permission of the interment rights holder, and the medical officer of health in some cases
- Lot Decorations- The rules that guide what cemetery visitors can place or plant on a lot where they have interment rights, or permission from the interment rights holder
- Memorialization- The rules that guide monument (headstone) placement, material, size, and upkeep. This section also details the

requirement for monument foundations, installed by Cemetery Staff via a service fee and contract with the interment rights holder.

Current Status and Initiatives

1. Opening and Closing for full burials has been contracted out on a pilot basis for 2019. In the past, operations staff from Transportation provided this service. They utilized a backhoe from the Transportation Department. The contractor uses a mini excavator which can fit in between most stones so far eliminating the need to move stones. The contractor also has a bucket that is designed to excavate grave sites. Opening and Closing for cremations is still being completed by operations staff.
2. Discontinuation of winter burials (November 15 to April 15th). Winter interments often require regrading of the grave site the following May as there is general settling after the interment is complete. The state of the site in the spring becomes understandably distressing for family members that contact the cemetery. Additionally, the wet nature of the property can create an unstable area for excavation and internment in the early spring and late fall. This causes a safety concern for staff and visitors. In addition, the mausoleum is currently set up for winter storage.
3. Flowerbeds – An area of administration that has an impact on the operations is the flower beds. The municipality currently offers one or five year flower bed contracts, although in the past there was an option to purchase a perpetual flower bed. The municipality discontinued selling perpetual flower beds in 1997. The sale of annual and five year flower beds as well as interest from the perpetual fund is used to offset operating costs which is currently not enough and is supported from the tax levy. Currently staff is reviewing costs and operation alternatives for consideration.
4. Expansion of Current Cemetery – Consideration for expansion of No Vault Section and explore the addition of a Scattering Section as these two alternatives could be contained within the existing cemetery footprint. There has also been a hold on the sale of graves in anticipation of a future expansion for additional Columbarium.

In addition to those items noted above there are administrative and operational updates required to the current Cemetery By-Law as well as suggestions and requests from the public that can be reviewed during this process.

Next Steps

A master plan provides guidance to ensure that the Cemetery continues to meet the needs of the community it serves. It also ensures that Cemetery services are responsive to changes in the bereavement industry including how services are delivered, and the scope of services that are offered.

The permanence of cemeteries transcends other typical municipal planning cycles. Typically, cemetery planning has a view to the 100-year horizon when contemplating existing capacity and future need. A cemetery master plan is an invaluable tool to ensure continuity of service delivery to the community, and to guide decision makers in ensuring the Cemetery is viable into the next century. Like many services, the needs and expectations of families are changing. Today's funeral service and interments have changed from even 10 years ago and families expect that we can respond to their requests. There are varied and changing ways that the interment of a loved one can be celebrated and in part, this master plan review will ensure we are responding to today's needs.

A Master Plan can address land-use development and operational strategies based on the following objectives.

- To address cemetery pressures.
- To analyze long-term cemetery needs.
- To plan an approach for delivering cemetery services.
- To plan for improvements to the cemetery.
- To evaluate the preservation and protection of the sensitive environmental features.

The master plan establishes clear goals for the ongoing long-range management of the cemetery, based on a need to balance service to the community, while making the best use of a land base, resources and with an aim of sustainability. The primary goal of a plan is to assess the current conditions, future needs, and financial health of the cemetery; as well as provide a road map for the future that will help guide capital investment, service needs, meet community expectations, budget requirements, and financing.

A review of the Cemetery By-Law will occur following the master plan process to ensure the regulatory by-law reflects the intent of the master plan. The plan will provide strategic guidance for administration, operations and major maintenance.

Operational Considerations:

Revisions to the By-Law require the Municipality to provide the Registrar with details of the standardized by-law that is being adopted and confirmation that the municipality is a member in good standing and must also follow specific notice requirements to ensure that customers and members of the public are aware of any proposed changes to the by-law. By-laws are only valid after they are submitted to and approved by the Registrar.

South Huron's Strategic Plan:

Section 6.2.2 of the Municipality of South Huron 2015- 2019 Strategic Plan identifies Strategic Objectives. The following elements are supported by the actions outlined in this report:

- ✓ Administrative Efficiency and Fiscal Responsibility
- ✓ Transparent, Accountable, and Collaborative Governance

Financial Impact: Should Council choose to move forward on the project, preparation of this plan will have financial impacts including resources, both internally and externally. The financial impact for the Cemetery Plan is to be included for council consideration in the 2020 Budget.

Legal Impact:

It is prudent to review the Cemetery By-Law periodically to ensure compliance with current legislation and operating procedures.

Staffing Impact:

Staff time from the Legislative Services and Recreation departments will be needed to undertake this review.

Communication:

Legislative requirements for communications under the *Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act*.

Policies/Legislation:

Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, 2002 (FBCSA)
By-Law 57-2016

Consultation:

Cemeteries Regulation Unit – Bereavement Authority Ontario
S. Becker, Director of Financial ServicesM. Goss, Acting ManagerD. Elliott,
Cemetery OperationsS. Johnson, Administrative AssistantA. Wolfe,
Administrative Assistant

Related Documents:

By-Law 57-2016

Respectfully submitted,

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