

January 1 2020

Mayor Ian Boddy and City Councillors,

My husband, [REDACTED], became interested in Natural Burial in 2013. Our friend, [REDACTED], was actively promoting the idea of Natural Burial for Owen Sound. [REDACTED] put a lot of effort into researching and investigating the significance of and reasons for Natural Burial and decided to support [REDACTED] in his quest. As we had discussed this issue together many times and we both agreed it was the best choice for us personally, I completely supported what [REDACTED] was doing.

[REDACTED] became sick in the late summer of 2018. We knew then that it was terminal and that the option of Natural Burial would not be available to us in Owen Sound.

In February of 2019, [REDACTED] and I attended and participated in the public consultation for a review of the Master Plan for Greenwood Cemetery. A public survey was distributed and there was a good discussion of the possibility for the cemetery to explore the idea of Natural Burial. [REDACTED] and I were both encouraged by this experience.

[REDACTED] died May 29, 2019. The next day, [REDACTED] received a phone call from Adam Parsons, saying that the option of Natural Burial would be available to us. My family and I spoke to Adam and the funeral home and it was arranged. We were shown the area that we were told would be designated for Natural Burial and were allowed to choose a spot there. We were pleased with the location and the spot we chose which over-looks the ravine and was a perfect choice for [REDACTED]. We have since visited the spot many times and are always reassured that it is beautiful and very meaningful for [REDACTED] and our whole family.

On October 18, 2019, an article was published in The Sun Times. It quoted Adam Parsons as saying "We're looking at the overall footprint of the cemetery and part of the process will be to come up with a recommendation for natural burial". Also "Whether that means a dedicated area or allowing it interspersed in between what would be a regular burial, we don't quite know what that looks like yet. But we already permit most of

what people are looking for." I was shocked and upset by these statements as we had been given to understand that where [REDACTED] was buried was specifically designated. I immediately wrote a letter to Adam and he graciously responded right away. (SEE ATTACHED)

On December 15, there was another article in The Sun Times. This announced that there would be another public meeting at which a document would be presented for public feedback. It said "What would be new, if the plan's recommendations are carried out, is a dedicated natural burial section would be created...". The article also stated that "After Wednesday's meeting, staff will analyze comments received.....".

On December 18, I attended the City of Owen Sound's Community Services Committee meeting. After Adam's presentation we were told that the public portion of the meeting was over and that if we had any comments we could discuss them with staff in another room. I did this but was disappointed that city council did not hear our concerns. We were invited to send a written submission to Adam Parsons and Kristan Shrider. This is my submission. I sincerely hope that city council will receive copies of this submission.

I want to express my disappointment, worry and sadness at the above scenario. My family and I buried [REDACTED] with our love and understanding that our wishes and his had been fulfilled and we were very grateful for this unexpected opportunity. With everything that has occurred since, I now feel insecure about where he is buried and what the future might bring. I need to know that the section where [REDACTED] is buried will be a dedicated area for natural burial. I hope that it will be left to return to nature but I now am under the impression that this won't happen.

My family and I would appreciate the location where [REDACTED] is buried to be officially and permanently designated only for natural burials as we were initially led to believe.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

----- Original Message -----

Subject: RE: natural burial
Date: 21 Oct 2019 13:02
From: "Parsons, Adam" <aparsons@owensound.ca>
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I do apologize if my comment in the Natural Burials article in the Sun Times Saturday caused you concern. As you are aware, we are working through the master plan process now. Any changes or updates to our policies and/or bylaw will be driven by the recommendations in the master plan, once they are accepted and approved by Council.

That said, when I suggested and supported the location for your husband [REDACTED] it was (and still is) with the intention that those ranges are to be the section recommended for our first section of natural burial plots. Ultimately, the Bereavement Authority of Ontario, who are the provincial regulator for Cemeteries, wants cemeteries to provide options. I anticipate the recommendations presented next month will speak to a natural burial section, that includes [REDACTED] plot, as well as options for those who may support some or all of the conventions of a natural burial, but don't necessarily require that they be interred in a dedicated natural burials section. Consider someone who supports natural burial, but wishes to be interred next to a spouse or family member who wishes for a more traditional burial. The second part of my comment was intended to address those types of scenarios.

I hope this provides some clarity. And it was certainly not my intention to create a sense that our recommendations would be anything different than what we discussed when your family chose to inter [REDACTED] with us.

Kindest regards,

Adam

Message 59 of 7

[REDACTED]
Sent: October 19, 2019 2:05 PM

To: Parsons, Adam

[REDACTED]
Subject: natural burial

Hi Adam

I have just read the article in the paper about natural burial and am upset by it . As you know, we buried my husband, [REDACTED], last spring following the ideals for a natural burial, using a site that we believed was designated specifically for that purpose. We were pleased and proud to have helped begin a new tradition in Owen Sound . The cemetery supported our decision and helped us in every way to accomplish this . You especially were supportive and helpful.

Can you please help me now to understand the meaning expressed in this article?

Thanks, [REDACTED]

Message 59 of 7

Community Services Department
Adam Parsons
City of Owen Sound
808 2nd Ave East
Owen Sound, Ontario N4K 2H4



Tel: 519 376-4440 ext.1221
Fax: 519 371-0511
aparsons@owensound.ca
www.owensound.ca

January 8, 2020

[REDACTED]
By email: [REDACTED]

Re: Your letter dated January 1, 2020 regarding Natural Burials at Greenwood Cemetery and the Cemetery Master Plan

Thank you for attending the December meeting of Community Services Committee and thank you for your letter dated January 1, 2020 expressing your concerns regarding the establishment of a natural burials area encompassing the lot where your husband [REDACTED] is interred.

When arranging for your husband's interment late last May, I spoke with your son [REDACTED] to discuss what was permissible under the existing Greenwood Cemetery Bylaw. Looking back at my notes, I had shared with [REDACTED] the following points:

- we do not use pesticides at Greenwood Cemetery;
- in this particular section, there is no requirement for a monument;
- caskets can be simple with no metal hardware as long as they have the equivalent strength to 3/4 inch pine plywood;
- embalming is not a requirement under the FBCSA, or the City Cemetery Bylaw;
- there was a block of unsold lots near the ravine that do not require a vault. This same area is also proximate to a ravine that provides a more natural general surrounding.

[REDACTED] also confirmed with Amanda that no concrete would be required. It was our goal at the time to work with you and your family to respect your late husband's wishes as much as we could under the terms of the current Cemetery Bylaw.

You had attended the initial meeting regarding the Master Plan in February of 2019 and you heard the interest from those who attended in a natural burial option at Greenwood. This early sentiment was also reflected in the results of the survey from the master plan process and as you heard I presented these results at the December meeting.

The Master Plan has 15 different recommendations under the themes of:

- Interment Options
- Administration, Operations and Grounds
- Buildings and Maintenance

Under the first theme, the first recommendation in the draft plan states:

It is recommended that a dedicated section for performing natural burials at Greenwood Cemetery be established and the bylaw is amended to clarify the aspects of natural burials that are to be permitted.

Staff have recommended in the draft, that the area where your late husband is interred be formally recognized as the natural burials area.

At the December meeting and currently through an on line platform we are soliciting feedback on all 15 recommendations.

Based on that feedback, we will take a report forward in February to finalize the Greenwood Cemetery Master Plan.

Following that, most likely in March, there will need to be an amendment to the Greenwood Cemetery Bylaw to establish the terms and conditions for the natural burials section. The staff report that goes forward will detail opportunities to progressively naturalize this area as lots are used, as well as to create a living or green buffer from the adjacent sections of Greenwood that include monuments etc.

We will talk with you as we continue our research and prepare the report in March with the details around natural burials that reflects your family's wishes and also respect the expectations of others who have family in other sections. I am confident we can work to find a solution that you can be comfortable with.

Again, thank you for taking time to share your thoughts and concerns with us. Please contact us at any time if you have other ideas or questions.
Kindest regards,

Adam Parsons



Manager of Parks and Open Space

c. Mayor and Council

City Manager, Wayne Ritchie

Director of Community Services, Pamela Coulter

Senior Manager of Parks and Property, Kristan Shrider

ON YOUR MIND?

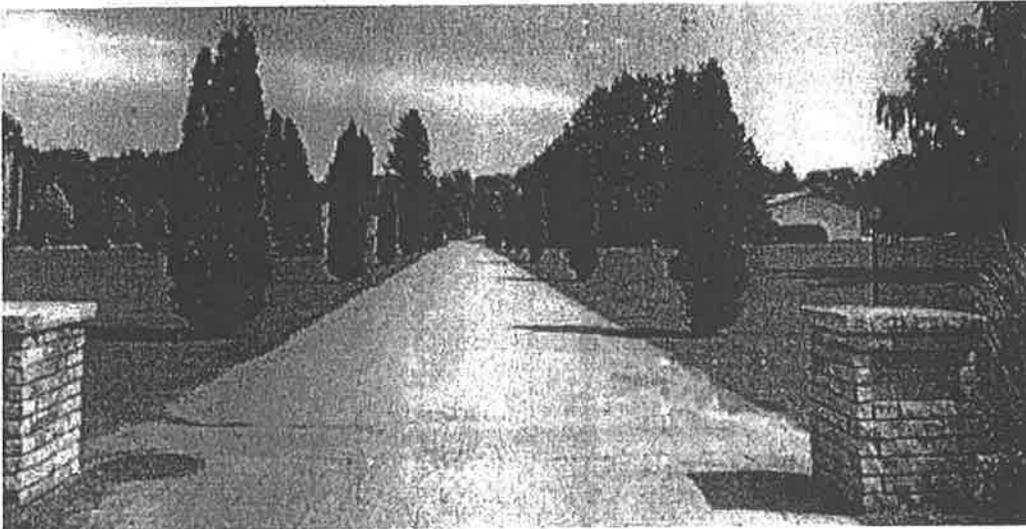
The Hub would love to hear from you. Email your letters, articles, photos, drawings, cartoons, YouTube or Vimeo links to

 letters

City may have taken nature out of natural burial



Published: 30 December 2019



When people congratulate me on having Natural Burial finally approved for Owen Sound after eight years of effort, I find I must disappoint them. It seems that the City has decided to take the "Nature" element out of Natural Burial. While the City agrees that they can bury bodies in the same ways as Jews and Muslims, without embalming and with a simple coffin, they have decided to omit the nature part and have manicured lawns with no markers as their newly created definition of Natural Burial. All this, despite a clear definition available from even the Natural Burial Association Of Canada stating, "with green burial, the above ground is a natural sanctuary replacing the manicured conventional cemeteries with a field of native grasses, trees, scrubs and wildflowers with a communal marker honouring those buried in this natural setting."

Does the City have an existing location that would be suitable for Natural Burial? Adam Parsons, Manager of Parks, admits that there is an "undeveloped" approved area that could be legally used. Undeveloped actually means it is already natural so they would need to be careful not to upset too much of the nature were they to perform Natural Burial in one of these "undeveloped" areas. This could be perfect and there could even be a communal marker (as long as they don't pass their new proposed by-law limiting the size of marker stones).

The location Adam has instead chosen is simply a row of grave plots, surrounded by stone marked plots, all of which would be indistinguishable from a manicured lawn with no markers surrounded by other manicured lawn graves.

I would have liked to communicate my concerns to the Community Services Committee at their Public Meeting on this issue December 18, but no questions were allowed before Brian O'Leary called the vote to end the Public meeting. We were dismissed to a separate area after the meeting to express our concerns but were told to send everything in writing. This was the first time I've attended a City Public Meeting that had been suddenly rescheduled [the Public Meeting was scheduled for January 15, 2020 according to Committee minutes] with 2 business days notice and no Public input allowed during the meeting.

What does this mean to those who wish we had Natural Burial in Owen Sound? Not much really. I doubt if many will choose Adam's Unnatural Natural Burial location. I guess some people just can't help trying to civilize nature.

Robert Hope, Owen Sound

Parsons, Adam

From: Shrider, Kristan
Sent: January 13, 2020 3:28 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: Parsons, Adam
Subject: RE: Comments regarding Cemetery Plan 2020

Hi Bob

Thanks again for reaching out and providing further input and suggesting resources on natural burial options.

The City has posted the survey on the website again and we hope to get more feedback on the masterplan.

We will be presenting survey results, including correspondence (letters, emails etc.) and comments from the December public meeting back to committee in February. This will then be followed by a masterplan update staff report and implementation plan of all recommendations.

Please feel free to reach out with any additional questions.

Thanks,
Shrides

Kristan Shrider, CBT, CIT
Senior Manager of Property and Parks & Open Space
City of Owen Sound
Phone: 519.376.4440x1275
kshrider@owensound.ca



From: Shrider, Kristan
Sent: January 2, 2020 10:41 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Comments regarding Cemetery Plan 2020

[REDACTED]

Thank you for the follow up email. I am glad that you have sent this information. I will review it and follow up with Adam on a few of your points.

We are also in the process of posting the survey back on line to hopefully receive more comments. Once this closes, we will be compiling the results and will be prepared to take the final update and report to committee.

I will make sure I get back to you with comment on your email below.

Thanks,
Shrides

Kristan Shrider, CBT, CIT
Senior Manager of Property and Parks & Open Space
City of Owen Sound
Phone: 519.376.4440x1275
kshrider@owensound.ca



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: January 2, 2020 9:03 AM
To: Shrider, Kristan <kshrider@owensound.ca>
Subject: Comments regarding Cemetery Plan 2020

Hi Kristan,

Here are my comments to the city's plan as requested at the Dec 18. I have also included a Natural Burial Plan that was adopted from the City of Victoria BC. I believe it is an excellent description of implementing Natural Burial. Since your email does not allow attachments I have cut-and-pasted a version of it at the bottom.

All the best in the New Year, [REDACTED]

When people congratulate me on having Natural Burial finally approved for Owen Sound after eight years of effort, I find I must disappoint them. It seems that the City has decided to take the "Nature" element out of Natural Burial. While the City agrees that they can bury bodies in the same ways as Jews and Moslems, without embalming and with a simple coffin, they have decided to omit the nature part and have manicured lawns with no markers as their newly created definition of Natural Burial. All this, despite a clear definition available from even the Natural Burial Association Of Canada stating, "with green burial, the above ground is a natural sanctuary replacing the manicured conventional cemeteries with a field of native grasses, trees, scrubs and wildflowers with a communal marker honouring those buried in this natural setting."

Does the City have an existing location that would be suitable for Natural Burial? Adam Parsons, Manager of Parks, admits that there is an "undeveloped" approved area that could be legally used. Undeveloped actually means it is already natural so they would need to be careful not to upset too much of the nature were they to perform Natural Burial in one of these "undeveloped" areas. This could be perfect and there could even be a communal marker (as long as they don't pass their new proposed by-law limiting the size of marker stones).

The location Adam has instead chosen is simply a row grave plots, surrounded by stone marked plots, all of which would be indistinguishable from a manicured lawn with no markers surrounded by other manicured lawn graves.

I would have liked to communicate my concerns to the Community Services Committee at their Public Meeting on this issue December 18, but no questions were allowed before Brian O'Leary called the vote to end the Public meeting. We were dismissed to a separate area after the meeting to express our concerns but were told to send everything in writing. This was the first time I've attended a City Public Meeting that had been suddenly rescheduled with 2 business days notice and no Public input allowed during the meeting.

What does this mean to those who wish we had Natural Burial in Owen Sound? Not much really. I doubt if many will choose Adam's Unnatural Natural Burial location. I guess some people just can't help trying to civilizing nature.



Natural Burial

Philosophy

Natural Burial is:

- a statement of personal values for those who seek to minimize their impact on the local and global environment.
- a spiritually fulfilling alternative to conventional burial, especially for people who are mindful of the cyclical nature of life.
- an environmentally sensitive practice where the body is returned to the earth to decompose naturally and contribute to environmental renewal.

A body is prepared for Natural Burial without embalming and buried in a biodegradable shroud, simple container or casket made from natural fibre, wicker or sustainably harvested wood.

This form of burial has been practiced since the dawn of human civilization.

The Natural Burial Site should complement Grey county's existing forest ecosystem.

As burials occur, a selection of native trees, shrubs, perennials, groundcover and spring bulbs are planted in clusters on and around grave sites. Families can choose some of what will be planted on their gravesites by selecting from a range of approved native plants offered by the Burial Park. For some graves, a young tree may be chosen from an adjacent tree nursery and any remaining open space is restored with native grasses and wildflowers.

Over time, each of area of the Natural Burial Site will develop into distinct "forest room," with their own unique character, yet blending with the surrounding natural environment.

A Natural Burial Site grave may be used for the burial of one person in a shroud, or a biodegradable container or casket. Cremated remains, in an un-enclosed state or in a fully biodegradable urn may also be buried in the Natural Burial Site.

Natural Burial Site graves are arranged to be used sequentially in a manner that works with the natural character and terrain of the site. Graves are assigned only when a death has occurred and according to the sequential use plan.

For every burial, a permanent record of all pertinent details, including the precise location, is created and this record is maintained, as required by law, in perpetuity at the Burial Park office.

Interments

Only human remains that are not embalmed may be buried in the Natural Burial Site.

For Natural Burial the body must be enclosed in a fully biodegradable shroud, casket or other container.

Families may be encouraged to have graveside committal services and arrange to participate in the in the filling in of the grave. Many families find participation in the complete graveside committal process a meaningful and important part of their bereavement journey.

Remembrance

Conventional, individual memorial markers or monuments are not used in The Natural Burial Site. Instead, communal memorial boulders, created from Bruce/ Grey sourced stone, may be placed in various locations throughout the Natural Burial Site.

The memorial boulders have room for simple inscriptions to record the names of the persons buried in the area nearest each boulder location.

As the Natural Burial Site become fully utilized and the memorial plantings mature, a walking path will be created that meanders through the Natural Burial Site connecting all the memorial boulders.

Planting & Maintenance

To create a diverse, balanced mix of plantings in The Natural Burial Site, the Burial Park carries out all planting activity according to an established planting plan. The trees, shrubs, wildflowers and groundcover used in the Natural Burial Site are typical of native species found in Grey & Bruce counties.

Tree, shrub and wildflower planting is done seasonally. Following a burial there may be a period from a few months, up to a full year, when the ground is left to settle before any planting can occur. This may mean that a burial that takes place in late winter may not have memorial plantings on the grave until the following fall.

Not every grave can have a tree planted on it. Trees must be planted with sufficient room for them to grow and create a healthy tree and contribute to the natural canopy for wildlife movement, forage and habitation. Families are offered a choice of plantings depending on the location of the grave, and they may be allowed to participate in the planting of their selections.

On recent graves, leaf mulch or natural woodchips are used to suppress grass, invasive plant species and weeds from establishing themselves before the memorial plantings are made. This cover contributes organic material to the soil and eventually breaks down.

The goal is to always maintain Natural Burial Site areas in as natural a state as possible; it is nonetheless necessary for the site to be managed and kept accessible, especially during the operational phase. Groundcover will be trimmed from time to time and weed control will be carried out periodically to ensure that trees and plantings can flourish. Invasive species will be monitored and removed as needed to stop them taking from hold.

Herbicides and pesticides will not be used at The Natural Burial Site. Normally rain is the only form of watering that will occur, but artificial irrigation may be used to assist in establishing memorial plantings.

Visiting

Access for graveside services is provided along a gravel roadway and only cemetery and funeral service vehicles are permitted into the Natural Burial Site (visitors can only access the Natural Burial Site on foot). As more and more graves are used in The Natural Burial Site, these roadways will be removed and reclaimed for additional grave space.

When fully utilized, access into The Natural Burial Site will be along a walking path. A few small clearings with seating will be maintained for visiting and quiet contemplation in a secluded setting. Natural Burial Site visitors are welcome during the regular visiting hours of the Burial Park.

Visitors are discouraged from seeking out individual graves. This limitation is in place because as trees, shrubs and ground cover are planted and mature, unrestricted access would be detrimental to their survival, as well as to the ecosystem of the area as a whole.

Ecological Benefits

Some of the key benefits of Natural Burial are:

- Efficient land use - based on more burial sites created through the elimination of easements required for memorials and infrastructure and eventual reclamation of roadways.
- Biodiversity and habitat enhancement - through the planting of indigenous plant species, and creating nesting sites and natural habitat for birds and other animals.
- Natural storm-water permeability and retention - through the reduction of hard or paved surfaces associated with conventional burial sites.
- Restoration and conservation - in perpetuity, of the area allowing the site to mature over time and integrate visually and functionally into the surrounding natural landscape.
- Elimination of pesticide and herbicide use – as opposed to those chemicals used in conventional landscape settings.

Parsons, Adam

From: Shrider, Kristan
Sent: January 13, 2020 3:30 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: Parsons, Adam
Subject: RE: Natural Burials

Hi Chris and Rachael

Thanks again for reaching out and providing further input and suggesting resources on natural burial options.

The City has posted the survey on the website again and we hope to get more feedback on the masterplan.

We will be presenting survey results, including correspondence (letters, emails etc.) and comments from the December public meeting back to committee in February. This will then be followed by a masterplan update staff report and implementation plan of all recommendations.

Please feel free to reach out with any additional questions.

Thanks,
Shrides

Kristan Shrider, CBT, CIT
Senior Manager of Property and Parks & Open Space
City of Owen Sound
Phone: 519.376.4440x1275
kshrider@owensound.ca



From: Shrider, Kristan
Sent: January 2, 2020 11:37 AM
[REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Natural Burials

[REDACTED] – thank you for the email. I am pleased that you have written to us about your support and vision for the natural burial options.

I will review your email in detail with Adam and ensure the comments are captured with the final report.

We are posting the survey on line again (soon) to hopefully receive more feedback prior to delivering the final report to committee.

Thanks again.

Thanks,
Shrides

Kristan Shrider, CBT, CIT
Senior Manager of Property and Parks & Open Space
City of Owen Sound
Phone: 519.376.4440x1275
kshrider@owensound.ca



[REDACTED]
Sent: January 2, 2020 11:32 AM
To: Shrider, Kristan <kshrider@owensound.ca>
Subject: Natural Burials

Hello Kristan,
According to the meeting we attended on Dec. 18, 2019, we had until Jan. 2 to submit an opinion. Since I couldn't find any form on the city website, I am writing you instead.
We support a natural burial site – I had always envisioned a natural field with grasses and shrubs, not a manicured lawn. We also feel that there is the need for a large stone/monument on which the names of the deceased could be recorded. Being able to select your space/spaces would also be important.
Thank-you,
[REDACTED]

Parsons, Adam

From: Coulter, Pam
Sent: January 13, 2020 8:05 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: Ritchie, Wayne; Parsons, Adam; Shrider, Kristan; Landry, Staci
Subject: RE: Greenwood Cemetery Master Plan

Thank you.
We will provide your email to committee with the other input on the draft.

p

Pamela Coulter, BA, RPP
Director of Community Services
519 376 4440 x 1252

-----Original Message-----

[REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, January 13, 2020 7:11 PM
To: Coulter, Pam <pcoulter@owensound.ca>
Cc: Ritchie, Wayne <wrightie@owensound.ca>; Parsons, Adam <aparsons@owensound.ca>; Shrider, Kristan <kshrider@owensound.ca>
Subject: Re: Greenwood Cemetery Master Plan

Here's what was printed your questionnaire does not really address the issue raised by Mr. Hope:

"When people congratulate me on having Natural Burial finally approved for Owen Sound after eight years of effort, I find I must disappoint them. It seems that the City has decided to take the "Nature" element out of Natural Burial. While the City agrees that they can bury bodies in the same ways as Jews and Moslems, without embalming and with a simple coffin, they have decided to omit the nature part and have manicured lawns with no markers as their newly created definition of Natural Burial. All this, despite a clear definition available from even the Natural Burial Association Of Canada stating, "with green burial, the above ground is a natural sanctuary replacing the manicured conventional cemeteries with a field of native grasses, trees, scrubs and wildflowers with a communal marker honouring those buried in this natural setting."

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On 13/01/2020, Coulter, Pam <pcoulter@owensound.ca> wrote:

- > 
- > Thanks for your email note on the Greenwood Cemetery Master Plan.
- >
- > Here is a link to the website with all the background information and
- > the draft master plan.
- >
- > <https://www.owensound.ca/en/city-hall/greenwood-cemetery-master-plan.a>
- > spx
- >
- > One of the recommendations of the master plan is:
- >
- > It is recommended that a dedicated section for performing natural
- > burials at Greenwood Cemetery be established, and the by-law is
- > amended to clarify the aspects of natural burials are to be permitted.
- >
- > I hope you can take some time to complete the survey. It will be open
- > until February 1st.
- >
- > Staff will bring a report on the draft master plan back to committee
- > in February.
- > Once the plan is approved, staff would then bring forward an amendment
- > to the cemetery bylaw to provide the detailed provisions with respect
- > to natural burials.
- >
- > If you would like further information - please contact me or Adam
- > Parsons, Manager of Parks and Open Space.
- >
- > Thank you,
- > Pam
- >
- > Pamela Coulter, BA, RPP
- > Director of Community Services
- > 519 376 4440 x 1252
- >
- > [cid:image002.png@01D266A6.EA6B71C0]
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- >