

Staff Report

Report To: Community Services Committee
Report From: Adam Parsons, Manger of Parks and Open Space
Meeting Date: February 19, 2020
Report Code: CS-20-023
Subject: 2020-2024 Greenwood Cemetery Master Plan
Recommendations Survey and Next Steps

Recommendations:

That in consideration of Staff Report CS-20-023 respecting the Greenwood Cemetery Master Plan Recommendations Survey and Next Steps, Community Services Committee recommends Council:

- 1) Approve the 2020-2024 Greenwood Cemetery Master Plan; and
- 2) Request staff bring forward a By-law to amend the Greenwood Cemetery By-law to implement the recommendations as outlined in Appendix 8 of the Master Plan (Attachment 6).

Strategic Initiative:

6. *Promote and Enhance Owen Sound's Built Heritage*
7. *Encourage and promote participation in cultural activities and active lifestyles*
8. *Support community safety and social inclusion*
9. *Address the City's infrastructure deficit*
10. *Maximize revenue sources and funding opportunities*
11. *Optimize the City's Operations while maintaining or improving quality of life*
13. *Improve energy conservation and efficiency and address climate change*

Report CS-20-023: 2020-2024 Greenwood Cemetery Master Plan Recommendations Survey and Next Steps

14. Maintain, improve and promote the use of our local parks and trails

Background:

The Community Services Committee approved report [CS-18-152 Greenwood Cemetery Master Plan Review and Update](#) (Attachment 1) in November of 2018 that provided the framework and approach to the update of the Greenwood Cemetery Master Plan. The foundation of the master plan is based upon public consultation with the community, stakeholders, staff and others in the bereavement service industry as well as changing trends and industry best practices for Cemetery management and operation.

The purpose of the review and update of the current master plan is to:

- Ensure continuity of service delivery to the community and to guide decision makers in ensuring the Cemetery is viable into the next century;
- Ensure the needs and expectations of families and funeral service providers are being met;
- Ensure that the Cemetery can respond to the changing ways that interment of a loved one can be celebrated; and
- Examine the lifespan and sustainability of Greenwood Cemetery

The 2020-2024 update has relied on input from the community and stakeholders throughout the process.

The process began with an open house in February of 2019 with an online survey following the open house start-up meeting.

The survey was launched February 20, 2019, and was open for 39 days. There were 52 responses.

In addition to the public input, staff undertook:

- A review of interment statistics from 2012-2018;
- Compared Greenwood Cemetery statistics to provincial trends;
- Reviewed industry trends and best practices; and
- Analyzed administrative services, Cemetery operations, the physical layout and function of the Cemetery for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

A draft master plan was presented at the December 18, 2019 meeting of the Community Services Committee, followed by a public meeting. 6 members of the public attended.

The 2020-2024 [draft master plan](#) (Attachment 2) is structured as follows:

Community Profile

Glossary of Terms

1.0 Background

1.1 Introduction and Purpose

1.2 Methodology

1.3 History

1.4 Buildings

1.4.1 Cemetery Office (1847) – Formerly Superintendent’s Residence

1.4.2 The Chapel (late 1860’s)

1.4.3 Public Washrooms – Next to the Chapel

1.4.4 Mausoleum (1927)

1.4.5 Service Building, Storage Bins and Yard

1.4.6 Columbarium/Columbarium Garden

1.4.7 The International Order of Odd Fellows Monument

1.4.8 Other Structures

1.5 Service and Delivery

1.6 Regulatory Framework

1.7 2012 Master Plan & Report Card

1.8 Cemetery Layout

1.8.1 Circulation and Entrances

1.8.2 Sections

1.9 Vegetation

2.0 Statistics and Industry Trends

2.1 Statistics

a) Interment Rights Sales

b) Current and Emerging Interment Preferences

2.2 Cemetery Lifespan

3.0 Public Input – What We Heard

3.1 Open House

3.2 Survey

4.0 Themes and Recommendations

4.1 Key Themes

4.2 Recommendations

5.0 Appendices

Through the process, 3 key themes emerged:

- Interment Options;
- Administration, Operations and Grounds:
- Buildings and Maintenance.

Under these themes there are 16 recommendations.

Following the presentation of the draft master plan at the public meeting, the public were asked to answer two questions related to each recommendation and indicate their answer on the charts:

1. Do you agree with the recommendation (i.e. should it stay in the final plan)?
2. What priority should be given to each recommendation? Short term (1-3 years), medium term (2-4 years), and long term (3-5 years).

Analysis:

The responses collected at the December 18, 2019 public meeting indicated unanimous support for 9 recommendations. There was no response to the remaining 7 recommendations.

Responses from the public meeting are summarized below and included as Attachment 3, December 18, 2019 Public Meeting Responses.

Attendees demonstrated a preference for short term implementation for 4 of the recommendations:

- 4.2.1 Create a natural burials section including By-law amendment establishing physical dimensions, location and rules for permissible aspects;

- 4.2.2 Modify the Cemetery By-law to Permit 4 cremated remains to be interred on each full size lot;
- 4.2.4 Develop Underutilized Space to Meet Demand for Interment Services based on Current and Projected Trends;
- 4.2.5 Formalize the Jewish Section and Establish a Muslim Section with Agreements by By-law

Notably, each of these options supported for implementation in the short term are from the key them of interment options.

Attendees demonstrated a preference for medium term implementation for 7 of the recommendations:

- 4.2.6.1 Tree maintenance and removals from inventory and subsequent replacement be implemented on a priority basis;
- 4.2.8 Implement a GIS mapping program of all interment sites at Greenwood Cemetery, compatible with Existing IT resources;
- 4.2.9 Review forms, electronic documents and website to ensure we are meeting accessible customer service requirements;
- 4.2.10 Assess Technological Solutions to Augment Accessible Customer Service Delivery
- 4.2.11 Accessibility of Buildings- Where accessible built environment is required, deliver customer service at City Hall, and consider accessible customer service as a design element of the Chapel renovation plan;
- 4.2.12 Create access points aligned with planned maintenance pathways on the 1st St. South and the 1st St. W side of the Cemetery;
- 4.2.13 Develop a Business Case for the Restoration of the Chapel, Including Indoor Columbaria and Contemplative Space.

Attendees demonstrated a preference for long term implementation for 1 recommendation:

- 4.2.14 Leverage the City's Asset Management Plan to Ensure Critical Maintenance of Cemetery Buildings is Identified and Addressed in the City's 10-year Capital Forecast.

There was no response to 4 recommendations:

- 4.2.3 Modify the Cemetery By-law Respecting Monument Sizes;
- 4.2.6.2 Develop a Memorial Garden/Horticulture Program;
- 4.2.7 Monitor the staffing model to ensure we are meeting the needs of families;

- 4.2.15 Explore the Designation of Greenwood Cemetery Buildings under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act Following the Renovation of the Chapel.

In addition to the facilitated exercise, discussion focused primarily on the topic of natural burials. Staff request that attendees who wished to have their comments included for consideration with the final plan were asked to forward their comments to staff in writing.

4 attendees submitted 3 pieces of correspondence in writing. Those correspondence are summarized here and included as Attachment 4, with names and personal information redacted.

- January 1, 2020 Letter addressed to Mayor Boddy and Council, expressing their wish that the natural burials section include naturalization above ground. The deceased spouse of the writer is interred within the area recommended for natural burials. The letter was shared with Mayor and Council and a response was provided January 8, 2020 by the City to the writer summarizing the cooperation between the City, funeral home and the family leading up to the interment, and committing to proving ongoing communication through the process of establishing a natural burial section at Greenwood Cemetery;
- January 2, 2020, email forwarding a copy of a letter published [online by the Owen Sound Hub](#) on December 30, 2019, titled "City may have taken the nature out of natural burial". The email also included thoughts and opinions on the ideal natural burial site including naturalization above ground and information from the Natural Burial Association, an advocacy group for establishing standalone cemeteries for the purpose of natural burial; and
- January 2, 2020 email expressing support for a natural burial site including naturalization above ground and a central and/or communal monument to memorialize those who are interred in the natural burials section.

1 email was received from a member of the public who was not in attendance at the December 18, 2019 public meeting:

- January 13 email expressing support for the views expressed in the letter published in the Owen Sound Hub.

Given the low numbers of public who attended the public meeting, staff created an online survey to solicit the same input on the recommendations.

The survey was available for 26 days, opening January 7 and closing February 1. It was promoted via media releases on January 7, and January 30th.

The survey generated 130 responses with a full summary included as Attachment 5.

Two general themes emerged from the survey responses:

1. There is strong support for all 16 recommendations from 69% to 99% support; and
2. The aggregated results demonstrated a preference by the public for all 16 recommendations to be implemented in the long term (3-5 years).

Implementing all recommendations in until 3-5 of the plan is strategically unfavourable. Allotting recommendations to be implemented over each prioritization window of the plan will allow staff to manage resources, financial commitments and disruptions to the indented purpose of the Cemetery as a place for quiet contemplation.

Based on community interest, internal processes and/or the need for some of the recommendations to be implemented in the short and medium terms, staff have analyzed the timing and method whereby each recommendation can be achieved and contemplated the City's requirements in conjunction with the survey results.

Attachment 6, a revised version of Appendix 8 of the draft plan, contains new information, summarizes the survey results, and prioritizes the recommendations over the short medium and long term, and includes:

- Is a follow up report, by-law amendment, and/or approval from the BAO required;
- A recommended implementation window, highlighted on the chart with a **green background**;
- Aggregate survey results, with the highest preference shown on the chart in **BOLD**;
- A rationale for the selected implementation window;
- A high level implementation plan for each recommendation.

Natural Burials

Understanding that natural burials is an emerging trend in the bereavement industry, and responsive to recommendations from the [2012 Greenwood Cemetery Master Plan](#) (Attachment 7), staff began research into the topic in August 2017 by networking with existing natural burial providers in Ontario and researching how natural burials may be permitted at Greenwood Cemetery. Staff also visited Woodlawn Memorial Park in Guelph where the operator had recently established a natural burials section within an existing Cemetery.

Throughout the master plan process, including at the meeting on December 18 and in the correspondence that followed, natural burial has been a dominant theme of public input.

The result was a recommendation under the Interment Options Theme:

4.2.1: Create a natural burials section including By-law amendment establishing physical dimensions, location and rules for permissible aspects, commits to implementing natural burials at Greenwood Cemetery in the short term (1-3 years) via a by-law amendment pending approval of the plan.

It became evident, based on public feedback, and local market conditions that the most suitable approach for Owen Sound was to incorporate a natural burials section within the existing footprint of Greenwood Cemetery (known as a hybrid model) rather than an expansion of the existing property or establishment of a new cemetery at a different location.

Although it was not well understood by the public, many aspects of what proponents of natural burials are seeking are currently permissible at Greenwood Cemetery.

Generally, proponents of natural burials seek an end of life option that has minimal impact on the environment. Embalming, finely finished caskets manufactured with non biodegradable components, monuments and pesticide use for grounds keeping are examples of common practices that someone seeking a natural burial may not support.

The existing Greenwood Cemetery By-law, and the Funeral Burial and Cremation Services Act permit all of the aspects of natural burials noted above.

- Simple wood caskets with no metal fasteners are available in local funeral homes.

- In Ontario remains are not required to be embalmed, and the Greenwood Cemetery By-law does not require embalming.
- No vault is required in certain sections at Greenwood Cemetery.
- Monuments are not required at Greenwood Cemetery.
- Generally, it is the practice at Greenwood Cemetery not to use pesticides.

Natural Burial is a preferred option supported strongly by respondents. Generally, the conditions desired by proponents of natural burial are permissible today under the existing Greenwood Cemetery By-law.

In order to ensure the principals of Natural Burials are upheld at Greenwood Cemetery, the City is exploring membership with the [Green Burial Society of Canada](#) (GBSC) and will work in the short term (1-3 years) to achieve Category 1: Green Burial Service Provider Approved Provider Certification with the GBSC. The requirements for 4 certification levels are detailed in Attachment 8. The certification application fee of \$350 and annual certification renewal fee of \$125 would be funded within the Cemetery's approved operating budget. No additional funding for certification is required.

Pending the success of the first natural burial section at Greenwood Cemetery, the City will explore Category 2 certification.

While the City is committed in principal to the ideals of natural burial as defined by the GBSC Category 1 Green Burial Service provider, a by-law to amend the Greenwood Cemetery By-law that details the operational and administrative processes for performing a natural burial will be required in the short term (1-3 years).

It is via a by-law amendment that the fulsome details of implementation will be established, but generally it is anticipated that the process to be defined by a by-law amendment will include:

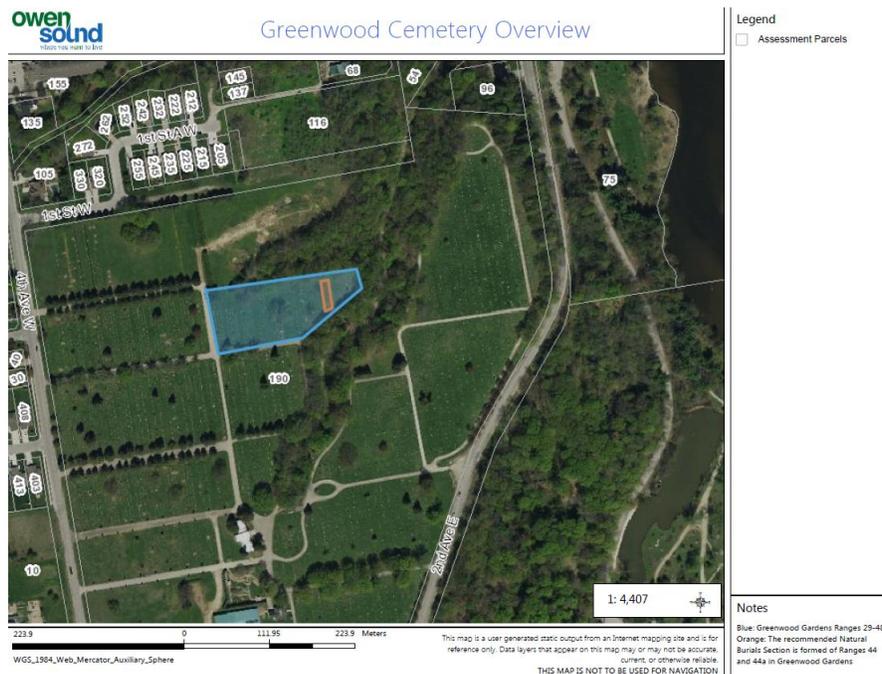
- The City will strive to align policies, by-laws and operating values for a natural burials section with the recommendations of The Green Burial Society of Canada;
- Greenwood Gardens Ranges 44 and 44A, a total of 82 lots, will be designated as a natural burials section;
- A detailed landscape and naturalization plan will be developed and brought to CSC for consultation, including a recommended native planting list, granular walkways and a central monument for the purpose of memorializing those who have chosen to be interred in the natural burials section;
- How a body is prepared prior to interment;

- The minimum container specifications;
- How and when the Natural Burial section will be progressively naturalized;
- Details of a communal memorial to be placed at the Natural Burials section;
- What will not be permitted in the Natural Burials Section; and
- What will be required by the City in order to permit storage of remains if a natural burial cannot be performed in a timely manner due to unsafe excavation conditions.

Greenwood Gardens ranges 44 and 44a are recommended based on:

- The availability of complete ranges;
- Surrounded on 3 sides by ravines and mature trees;
- A healthy microcosm and soils that support actinomycetes and other microorganisms active in the decomposition process and essential to healthy soils;
- Favourable underground soil conditions for interments that will not permit concrete vaults, liners or other non-biodegradable containers;
- The option for naturalization that will support the ideals of the Green Burial Society of Canada;
- Naturalization at this location will provide a wildlife corridor between ravines.

The location of the recommended natural burials area within Greenwood Cemetery:





Legend
 Assessment Parcels

Notes

The recommended Natural Burials Section is formed of Ranges 44 and 44a in Greenwood Gardens

This map is a user generated static output from an Internet mapping site and is for reference only. Data layers that appear on this map may or may not be accurate, current, or otherwise reliable.
 THIS MAP IS NOT TO BE USED FOR NAVIGATION

A panoramic photo of the area where natural burials are recommended:



The hybrid model approach incorporates a natural burials section within the footprint of an existing cemetery. This approach requires some strategic planning to ensure existing traditional graves that bracket the recommended ranges are respected. As a part of the landscape design process, a landscape architect will be retained and tasked with providing a design that creates green visual barriers between traditional ranges and natural burial ranges.

As green buffers grow and mature over the long term the end result will be an area that is similar in appearance from the outside to the hedges established in the Northwest section.

Existing hedgerows in the northwest section:



Inside the natural burials section, the hedgerows or alternative green buffer treatment will create a microcosm for flora and fauna, create a clear delineation for maintenance activities in traditional burial ranges, and provide an above ground archetype consistent with the ideals of the Green Burial Society of Canada. The buffers will also respect those with existing lots in the adjacent area who have not selected a natural burial option.

In order to support the establishment and operation of a natural burials section, the City will develop a fee structure to be included in the City's fees and charges by-law (Attachment 9) for this purpose.

Consideration will be given to:

- Offsetting the cost of establishing a natural burials section;
- Offsetting the anticipated reduction in maintenance in the long term within the natural burials section.

Financial/Budget Implications:

Green Burial Society of Canada Category 1 Green Burial Service Provider Certification and Membership Fees \$475 from the City's approved 2020 operating budget.

A capital request as a part of the City's 2021 Capital Budget process to retain a Landscape architect for the purpose of designing a landscape plan for the Natural Burial Section in alignment with the ideals of the Green Burial Society of Canada, estimated \$2,000.00.

A capital request as a part of the City's 2022 Capital Budget process to retain a contractor to install approved elements of a natural burials section landscape plan such as a central monument, walkways and shrubs.

An operating budget request in 2021 for Cemetery plant materials to support the planting of native ground covers as naturalization occurs.

Development of a fee structure for natural burials.

Communication Strategy:

Communication To Date:

November 21, 2018 Public Meeting and Cemetery Master Plan Review and Update Kickoff

[Report CS-18-152 Greenwood Cemetery Master Plan Review and Update](#)

February 20, 2019 Public Engagement Survey

[Report CS-19-132 Greenwood Cemetery Master Plan Update, Survey Results and Next Steps](#)

[Presentation of the Draft Master Plan, December 18, 2019](#)

January 7, 2020 Greenwood Cemetery Master Plan Draft Recommendations Survey

This Report

Future Communication (anticipated timelines):

In 2020:

Ongoing direct communication with members of the public who attended one or both public meetings and provided contact information;

March 2020- Report establishing formal agreements for the Jewish and Muslim Sections with the subject communities by agreements by by-law;

June 2020 - Short Term priority recommendation by-law amendment, as detailed in Appendix 8 of the plan, including the Natural Burial Process;

July 2020 - Submission of initial By-law Amendment to the BAO for approval;

September 2020- review forms, website and create accessible electronic documents based on existing hardcopy forms and documents;

October 2020 – Report to Accessibility Advisory Committee on the accessible document project:

Beyond 2020:

Implement the recommendations on the prioritized schedule detailed in Appendix 8 of the plan.

Consultation:

Pam Coulter, Director of Community Services

Kristan Shrider, Senior Manager of Property and Parks & Open Space

Amanda Tennant-Bumstead, Parks and Cemetery Administrative Coordinator

Bereavement Authority of Ontario

Community Engagement throughout the master plan process

Emails and letters received throughout the master plan process

Attachments:

Attachment 1. [CS-18-152 Greenwood Cemetery Master Plan Review and Update](#)

Attachment 2. Draft 2020-2024 Greenwood Cemetery Master Plan

Attachment 3. December 18, 2019 Public Meeting Recommendations Prioritization 'Dotocracy' Exercise Results

Attachment 4. Correspondence received in response to the December 18, 2019 Public Meeting

Attachment 5. 2020-2024 Greenwood Cemetery Master Plan Recommendations Prioritization Survey Results

Attachment 6. 2020-2024 Greenwood Cemetery Master Plan Appendix 8

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Attachment 7. [2012 Greenwood Cemetery Master Plan](#)

Attachment 8. Green Burial Society of Canada Approved Provider Criteria

Attachment 9. [City of Owen Sound Fees and Charges By-law](#)

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