



Committee Agenda Report

Committee Name: Environmental Action Advisory Committee (EAAC)

Meeting Date: August 26, 2024

Submitted By: Chloe Preston, Municipal Clerk

Topic: Burial Options in North Grenville

Goal: Seek Input from the EAAC on Burial Options in North Grenville in relation to an upcoming Staff Report to Council

Background:

A Notice of Motion was brought forward to Council on June 4th, 2024 as stated below:

Whereas the Municipality of North Grenville has care and control of the operations of the Kemptville Union Cemetery; AND

Whereas there is increasing preference for cremation over earth burial and an increasing request for internment in a columbarium; AND

Whereas a columbarium is a low maintenance capital investment for cemeteries which provides for an efficient use of space within a cemetery; AND

Whereas the sale of niches in a columbarium could generate additional revenue that would offset the care and maintenance of the municipally operated cemetery; AND

Now therefore be it resolved that Council direct staff to report back to Council in the month of September with a variety of options for a burial and internment including columbarium for the Kemptville Union Cemetery including capital implications for the 2025 budget.

For Committee reference, the Municipality has had care and control of the Kemptville Union Cemetery since approximately the 1970s. Under the Cemeteries Act, any abandoned cemetery or relinquished cemetery becomes the care and control of the municipality of jurisdiction.

The Municipality, under the joint care of the Clerk's Division and the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department, diligently maintain and operate the Kemptville Union Cemetery. It has been observed that the cemetery has not been operating in a cost-recovery position and that the fees and charges for cemetery services have not been modified in over eight (8) years.

Staff have been approached by a variety of companies in the past offering potential solutions and modifications to improve the desire and use of the Kemptonville Union Cemetery, one of which was the installation of a columbarium. Prior to the Notice of Motion rising to Council, staff had already begun preparations for a capital request in the 2025 budget. The trends in burial desires have been shifting over the past decade away from traditional coffin burial, especially towards cremation burial. Many municipal cemeteries have installed columbarium to increase their use and reduce the maintenance requirements on staff.

The discussion that was had at the Council table on June 4th expanded the original direction of staff to include a wider approach to burial solutions in North Grenville. As a result, staff have begun to examine and research the following alternative burial options:

- Columbarium
- Green Burials
- Pet Cemeteries

Staff are clear that we believe that there is no singular solution to burials in North Grenville and that as a progressive municipality we are exploring all options for people's wishes for their final resting place.

How Does This Relate To The Committee:

Staff are aware that the EAAC has been interested in Green Burials in North Grenville and that there may be some apprehension to the encouragement of cremation due to environmental impacts.

How Does This Relate To The Council Strategic Plan:

Strategic Pillar: Balanced and Environmentally Sustainable Growth

Strategic Pillar: A Strong, Connected, and Vibrant Community

Outcome:

To begin, staff have completed a significant amount of research which is summarized at a high level below;

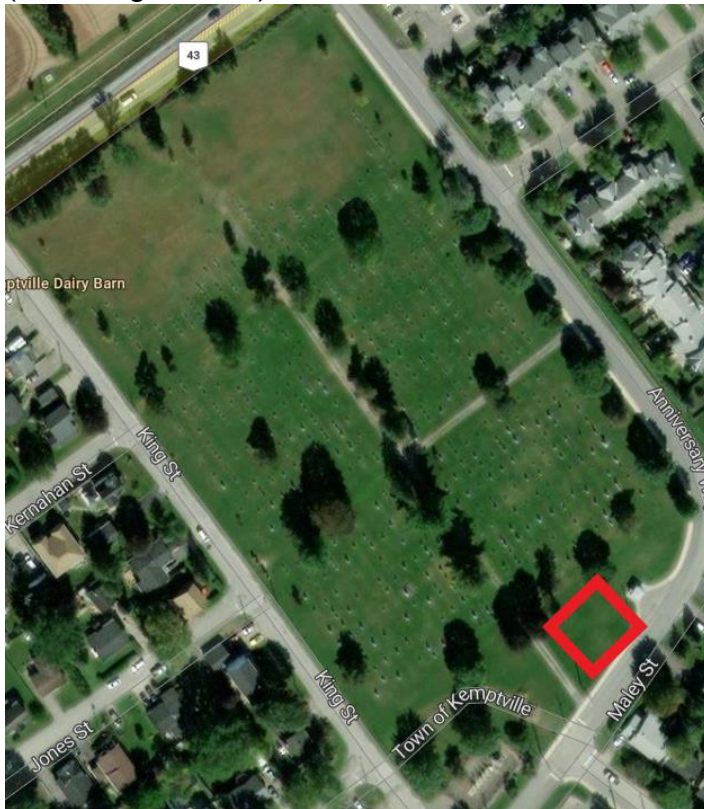
1. Pet Cemeteries

This is a difficult solution for the municipality to undertake for a variety of reasons because under the Cemeteries Act, pets are not permitted to be buried in the same cemetery as human remains. As a result, the only option to provide this service in North Grenville would be to create an additional cemetery designated to non-human burials, draft a new by-law relating to the operations, rules and regulations of the non-human cemetery and have them approved by the Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO). In staff's research, not many municipalities operate pet cemeteries for this reason and leave the service exclusively to the private sector.

2. Columbarium

A rising trend for after-death wishes and pre-arrangements have shifted to cremation, especially in the past decade. Within the last year alone, the Kemptonville Union Cemetery has seen a shift to 80% cremation burials. As a result, and in an effort to reduce maintenance requirements, staff have explored the option of a columbarium.

After review of the current mapped sections of the cemetery and to reduce the impact on the remaining burial sites, staff recommend installing a columbarium on the unmapped portion at the south portion of the cemetery property along Maley Street (see image below).



Staff are hopeful that the installation of the columbarium will help to generate much needed income and reserve funding to continue the operations of the Kemptville Union Cemetery, even after all burial plots are sold. Staff believe that installing a columbarium which has buildable/expansion ability will provide the best future options. Furthermore, it is proven that columbarium reduce the amount of staff time required to operate and maintain cemeteries which is especially important for North Grenville as we currently do not have a dedicated cemetery division, but rather a shared

operation between two departments with limited resources.

A recent amendment to the regulations regarding the care and maintenance funds, allows for cemeteries to pull from the care and maintenance trust accounts for the purchase of a columbarium. This could potentially reduce the capital impact on the 2025 budget.

In order to execute this process, a landscape architect would need to be contracted

for drawings and plans to maximize the planning, keeping in mind future growth as well as ensuring the creation of a natural, somber, and peaceful location for individuals to visit and remember their loved ones. An initial concept idea is shown below



3. Green Burial/Green Cemetery

After initially receiving an information package on Green Burials and conducting research into green burial options in Ontario, staff have found that a number of green cemeteries exist across the province (however more exclusively to Southern Ontario). The closest operation in Eastern Ontario is with the City of Kingston which is not yet operational and continues to be in the by-law review stages with the BAO. Staff have spoken to cemetery administration staff in Kingston and Cobourg about green burial options and have planned a site visit later in the Fall to visualize and see operations. In discussion with the City of Kingston, staff noted an immediate uptick in desire of use for the cemetery when Council initially passed the by-law creating the green option. However, they have not been able to commence operations until their review period has concluded with the BAO. This brings an interesting set of questions and considerations for North Grenville in the evaluation phases. Green burial in essence is a more environmentally friendly option for individuals not wanting embalming or cremation and is a relatively quick process that involves burial in either a shroud or a specific decomposable coffin.

Staff have reviewed the information provided and observe a few operational constraints that currently prevent green burials in North Grenville:

- Kemptville Union Cemetery only operates May-October each year, meaning that green burials would only be available at-need and could not be pre-arranged given death's unpredictability. Furthermore, at the current time, staff could not accommodate year-round operations in the Kemptville Union Cemetery due to staffing numbers and lack of capital equipment available to penetrate the ground in significant cold spells
- Without a dedicated cemetery division, staff fear that the popularity around green burials would result in high demand on a thinly staffed joint operation

Originally the proposal for green burials was presented to be included in the northern portion of the Kemptville Union Cemetery (see image below).



However, with the expansion of County Road 43 and the planned sidewalk to swoop into the cemetery project, staff do not support this location for green burials. A four-lane highway, even with trees, would not provide a somber environment that is often associated with green burials.

As a result, if Council were to seek to investigate green burials as an option for North Grenville, staff would recommend creating an alternate site, perhaps in the rural portion of the municipality (similar to many other green burial sites) that can pay homage to the environment, forestry, and environmental reflection as a final resting place for individuals. In an initial internal staff consultation meeting, multiple alternative locations were identified as potential green burial sites on municipally owned lands. The process to approve a site for the creation of a cemetery would be lengthy, but possible, should Council seek to engage in this process.

The underlying issue for the operation of a green burial cemetery will be the operational constraints in staffing as North Grenville operates without one currently in an at need capacity for the Kemptville Union Cemetery. As services and the municipality expand, this could be a consideration for Council but currently staffing levels would not be able to accommodate the popularity of green burials.

Should North Grenville proceed with Green Burials, an independent green burial by-law would need to be drafted, approved by Council and sent to the BAO for final approval. The current estimated timeframe provided to staff in investigations was eighteen (18) months. The timeframe on approval of a new cemetery location has not been specifically identified and may be location specific.