



Hamilton

# INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b>	Chair and Members Public Works Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	August 16, 2018
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Feasibility of Green Burials as a Burial Option in Hamilton (PW18071) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
<b>PREPARED BY:</b>	John Perrotta (905) 546-2424, Extension 4402
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Craig Murdoch, B. Sc., Director, Environmental Services Division Public Works Department
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

## Council Direction:

At its meeting of January 24, 2018, Council approved a motion as part of Public Works Committee Report 18-001, Item 7.2 which directed staff to investigate both the community interest and feasibility of natural/green burials as a burial option in Hamilton and to report back to the Public Works Committee.

## Information:

A green burial, also known as a natural burial or eco-burial, is a relatively new trend emerging in North America for the ecologically, spiritually or financially conscious person. A natural/green burial offers an environmentally friendly alternative for a final resting place as naturally as possible. The process uses minimal energy and resource consumption and reduces one's ecological footprint once a person passes. The process includes no embalming, direct earth burial, biodegradable containers, and some form of communal memorialization. The concept dates back thousands of years and has been practiced by indigenous peoples and other cultures for centuries. Trends indicate demand for natural/green burials is increasing as people become aware of the option.

Natural/green burial has three core tenets, being social, economic and environmental sustainability. Societal trends exhibit a preference for environmentally sustainable choices, opening natural/green burial as an additional service option and new opportunity for revenue.

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In 2014, Lees and Associates were commissioned to assess, analyse and provide recommendations to the City regarding the delivery of sustainable cemetery services. In analysing future cemetery land needs and development opportunities, the study encouraged new interment options for residents, and recommended a natural/green burial area at Mount Hamilton Cemetery to enhance the attractiveness of City Cemeteries.

The report also emphasises natural/green burial as an emerging trend in Ontario. Several communities in the 2013 Southern Ontario Benchmarking Survey reported that families have been inquiring about the availability of this service option in their area. Trends indicate that the demand for natural/green burials is slowly increasing as people become aware of the option. The United Kingdom is leading the way with green burials where green cemeteries have been in operation since the early 1990's.

In Ontario, natural/green burial services are currently offered at Union Cemetery in Coburg, Meadowvale Cemetery in Brampton, Woodlawn Memorial Park in Guelph, Dufferin Meadows in Pickering and Fairview Cemetery in Niagara Falls. Currently, the City of Hamilton cemetery administrative office records inquires for natural/green burial and they are receiving, on average, 7 inquires per month.

An article published in the Hamilton Spectator on January 4, 2018, titled "Hamilton resident pushes for green burials", and a subsequent private social media campaign resulted in cemetery staff receiving 85 emails from residents expressing their interest in having a natural/green burial option at one of the Hamilton Municipal Cemeteries.

In addition, in the spring of 2018, cemetery staff engaged the general public and determined that natural/green burial was an option that Hamilton residents wish to see offered. A general survey on cemetery interment options, supplies and services, was conducted at two events, the Hamilton Cemetery Open House and Tour (June 16, 2018), and the Seniors Kick-off Show (May 30, 2018). There were 24 participants in the survey. The results indicate that 62.5% of the participants surveyed knew what green or natural burial is, and 58.3% of participants surveyed would have interest in this type of burial option.

As part of a staff initiated master planning process for Mount Hamilton Cemetery, an area has been identified to accommodate a natural/green burial section, as shown in Appendix "A" to Report PW18071. In order to implement the program, capital funding is required to survey, design and construct the area. The capital costs are an estimated \$100,000 which will be referred to the 2019 capital budget process. It should be noted that the costs cannot be accommodated within the limited Block Funding received by the Parks and Cemeteries Section, the requested Capital will be shown without a

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funding source. All administration, maintenance and education outreach can be accommodated within the existing operating budget and staff complement.

The Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO) administers provisions of the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, 2002 (FBCSA) on behalf of the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services. They are responsible for protection of the public interest, and work towards the regulation and licensing of the bereavement sector across Ontario by reviewing and approving cemetery plans and municipal by-laws.

To establish a natural/green burial section, the BAO requires the registered cemetery plan to be updated and resubmitted with the addition of the natural/green burial section identified on the plan for review and approval. Lot dimensions, burial depth, and a numbering system to track the burials are to be outlined on the plan, to ensure the new section is in compliance with the physical standards of in-ground graves outlined in Section 154 of Ontario Regulation 30/11.

In addition, to ensure a standard of natural/green burials is being followed, the Municipal By-laws (12-151) governing Cemeteries requires updating to reflect the rules and regulations for the natural/green burial section of the cemetery.

The updated by-laws must be submitted to the BAO for approval before they are deemed official. Once approved, the by-laws must be published in a local newspaper with general circulation, posted clearly at all active Cemetery entrances for four weeks, and delivered to each supplier of memorials who have delivered a memorial to the cemetery during the last year. The BAO will then require a copy of the newspaper notice, a photo of the sign that was posted at the cemetery entrance indicating the start and end dates of posting written on the back of the photo, a list of the names and addresses of the memorial dealers who received notice of the proposed changes, and two copies of the proposed by-laws.

Staff find merit in the pursuance of establishing a green burial site in Mount Hamilton Cemetery, supported both by study recommendations and community input. If approved, the one-time capital funding request, to be identified as part of the 2019 budget process as unfunded, will provide for the implementation of the green burial site with operational costs to be maintained at existing levels. This new green burial program is consistent with the 2016-2025 Strategic Plan priority of Clean and Green, offering a progressive and sustainable service to residents.

### **Appendices and Schedules Attached**

Appendix A: Mount Hamilton Cemetery – Master Plan – Natural / Green Burial Section