



Claresholm

REQUEST FOR DECISION

Meeting: August 12, 2024

Cemetery Bylaw Update – Fees Increase

DESCRIPTION/BACKGROUND:

During the past year, Administration has been reviewing the cemetery and its operations. This has come about during some staffing changes, including a change in who manages the cemetery sales and services, as well as some review of processes. During this process there was some concern that the Town is under charging for these services. As such Administration did a fee review, including a fee comparison to other cemeteries in the vicinity.

Providing cemetery services to our community is viewed as an important service and we want that service to be as accessible as possible. However, we also do not want to be putting undue burden on tax payers to provide this service, nor create a situation where our residents are subsidizing cemetery costs for individuals in neighboring communities. With the significant cost difference between small towns and the cities, there is a concern that individuals will come from the city to be buried in Claresholm. The savings for doing so are not insignificant.

The attached chart shows rates for a number of communities, including comparisons to Lethbridge and Calgary, and you can see that small-town rates are only a fraction of what they are in the city, but even in comparison to other towns of similar size, most of the rates are on the low end, especially our servicing costs (open and close rates).

DISCUSSION/OPTIONS:

If the rates were increased by approximately 50% (some rates by less than that and some by more) the Town would be more in line with the average other communities are charging, and be less likely to attract many city burials.

A comparison chart of Claresholm's current rates (bright pink on far left) to other communities is attached below. Claresholm proposed rates are on the far right in red.

While updating the bylaw for rates, we are also taking the opportunity to address a few other items within the bylaw. These additions/changes are included in the attached bylaw in **RED**, plus Schedule "B" is completely revamped.

Additional changes include increased clarity around burials on weekends and holidays. The bylaw used to read, essentially, that NO burials were allowed on Sundays and holidays. This generally has not been followed in practice, and with on-call staff always being on duty on weekends and holidays, there is no issue with burial of cremains on any day, as only one person is needed, but full burials require additional staff, which may or may not be available.

Additional clarity was also added around monuments and removing the ability to put ground mounted markers or plaques for cremains on an existing plot, requiring these to be incorporated into the existing monument. This is due to the ground mounted markers are difficult to maintain, get over grown, and look shabby shortly after installed.

As you will note in the draft bylaw, administration is recommending that the fee increase be delayed after passage of the bylaw to January 1, 2025 to provide residents some warning prior to the new rates coming into effect. This will allow anyone currently looking to purchase a plot to avoid being caught unaware.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

It is Administration's recommendation that the attached bylaw, Bylaw #1790 – Cemetery Bylaw be passed by Council to increase the fees to better cover costs and be more in line with other surrounding communities.

This item was presented to the Audit and Finance Committee on July 30, 2024 and they passed a motion to recommend to Council that the cemetery fees be adjusted by approximately 50%, as per the recommended fees presented.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS:

Moved by Councillor _____ to give Bylaw No. 1790, the Cemetery Bylaw, first reading.

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1.) Cemetery Fee Comparisons Chart
- 2.) Bylaw 1790 – Cemetery Bylaw (w/ Schedule "A")
- 3.) Bylaw 1790 – Schedule "B" – Claresholm Cemetery Contract for Sales and Services
- 4.) Bylaw 1790 – Schedule "C" – Application for Permit: Monument installation or change of existing Monument.

PREPARED BY: Blair Bullock, CPA, CA – Director of Corporate Services

APPROVED BY: Abe Tinney - CAO

DATE: August 7, 2024
