

CITY OF IQALUIT
CEMETERY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #01
MAY 28, 2020 at 12:00 p.m.
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

PRESENT– Via Teleconference

Councillor Joanase Akumalik
Mayor Kenny Bell
Ross Paterson, Manager of Infrastructure Programs, Community & Government Services
Martha Nowdlak, Health Systems Navigator, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI)
Jodi Durdle-Awa, Policy Services, Family Services
William Lu, Solicitor, Government of Nunavut – non-voting member

ABSENT

Kunuk Methusalah, Anglican Church
Mathew Akavak, Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA)

PRESENT FROM ADMINISTRATION – Via Teleconference

Amy Elgersma, Chief Administrative Officer
Joseph Brown, Superintendent of Operations
Rod Mugford, Municipal Enforcement Chief
Shane Turner, Superintendent of Water and Sewer

Councillor Akumalik opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Councillor Akumalik provided some history on the old cemetery and the Apex Cemetery.

Councillor Akumalik asked the members to introduce themselves.

Mayor Bell noted that committee members will have some difficult conversations and that everyone must treat each other with respect. Changes are needed and must be made in the best interest of the residents to ensure burials are conducted in a respectful manner. Committee members must be honest in their input and respect other committee members' input.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion CA #20-01

Moved by: Mayor Bell
Seconded by: Rod Mugford

Adoption of agenda as presented.

Unanimously Carried

1. **MINUTES.**

None

2. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

None

3. **NEW BUSINESS**

a. **Committee Terms of Reference**

Rod Mugford, Municipal Enforcement Chief, reviewed the Committee Terms of Reference.

Ms. Durdle-Awa suggested that the Committee members should include a representative from the Department of Health.

Ms. Elgersma advised that they have not been invited as a member. She noted that hospital staff are consulted on matters pertaining to the deceased. She recommended that the committee remain as it is and if advice or input is needed from the Department of Health or from the hospital, they can be invited to attend as a delegate or guest.

Motion CA #20-02

Moved by: Mayor Bell

Seconded by: Martha Nowdlak

Committee recommends that Council approve the Terms of Reference for the Cemetery Advisory Committee.

Unanimously Carried

b. **Committee Composition – Identify Elder Member**

Councillor Akumalik asked Ms. Nowdlak if she would assist him in finding an elder to serve on the committee. Ms. Nowdlak agreed to help.

Councillor Akumalik asked the number of elders required for the committee.

Ms. Elgersma reviewed the by-law, which determines the number of members on the committee. There would be one elder on the committee representing the elders of Iqaluit.

c. Cemetery Site Report

Ms. Elgersma advised that a City Staff Working Group has been formed to address cemetery issues internally to ensure that the Cemetery Advisory Committee has adequate information to make recommendations. The following are the highlights:

- Several staff volunteered to be on the committee who are very committed to help find solutions.
- Site visit carried out which included the Public Works road crew to help determine a plan.
- There are issues with soil collapsing in to the graves and the solution was to build a wood box to place in the grave. This was implemented in 2018 and solved the problem.
- Other significant issues are:
 - Accumulation of water on the surface of the site.
 - Accumulation of water in the graves after the holes are dug.
 - The water on the site is a result of permafrost degradation.
 - Currently water in the grave is pumped out the morning of the funeral and pumped again later in the day.
 - Since 2016, there is a noticeable sinking of graves in the ground which requires additional fill and levelling.
 - Pathway and nearby roadways are sinking and are uneven.
 - Crosses are not in a proper line.
 - This was done to create a walking space between the graves.
 - The tradition in Iqaluit is to bury people so they are facing the water.
- City Council has approved \$160,000 in the Capital Spending Plan for cemetery soft-scape.
 - The intent was to do landscape work – remove tundra, additional soil would be placed on top, beautification and improving pathways.
 - During the site visit, a long-term plan was determined. The following is the proposal:
 - Raising the cemetery site by three feet with gravel.
 - The cemetery would be surveyed and marked appropriately.
 - Remove the crosses and raise the sites so it is crowned so the water can drain off the site into ditches.
 - This would enable drainage and less degradation of permafrost.
 - Graves would not have to be dug deep into the ground. They would be dug into the new soil and some of the ground.
 - This would prevent water from accumulating into the graves.
 - This would require having a site design to raise the site to ensure proper drainage.
 - This year:
 - Level the pathway.
 - Level graves that are sinking.

- Install 50 burial boxes.

The following questions were asked and answered:

- Could Tower Arctic who are working on the deep sea port be approached to provide free gravel?
 - Once the site design has been completed, the amount and type of material needed will be known. It will then determine how the project will be procured, including if there is interest in the community or local businesses to contribute to the project.
- Once a decision is made on the solution to resolve the cemetery site issues, individual meetings should be held with family members to explain what is being done so they understand that their loved ones are being treated appropriately.

Jodi Durdle-Awa left the meeting.

d. By-law Review

Rod Mugford, Municipal Enforcement Chief, explained the Cemetery By-law No. 328 is old and requires some updating based on the recommendations and findings of the committee.

Mr. Mugford explained the by-law lays out that the City identifies, maintains and prepares the site for interments. The interment is the responsibility of the funeral service provider.

Mr. Mugford explained that the by-law would be required to be amended regarding interment.

Ms. Elgersma noted through discussions at meetings, it will become evident what needs to be included in the by-law. She suggested that amendments or a new by-law could be proposed at a later date to include items as suggested by committee members.

e. Funeral Cost Discussion

Amy Elgersma, Chief Administrative Officer, advised that the City Staff Working Group reviewed issues regarding costs and assistance for burials.

- There is currently one business offering funeral services in Iqaluit.
 - Transportation of the casket, funeral coordination, preparation of the body with assistance from hospital staff, administration, arranging to view the body at the hospital morgue, provision of a casket, cross and name plaque.
 - Cost approximately \$4635.
- When comparing costs with other provinces, the cost in Iqaluit is less. This is because the practice in Nunavut is not to embalm the deceased.
- Previously, the funeral service provider was contracted by the City to provide cemetery maintenance and service to open and close graves.
 - The City paid \$1,200 per burial for site services.

- In reviewing invoices, it became apparent that the funeral service provider changed an additional \$1,200 for the burial for opening and closing the graves.
- In 2018, the City took over the responsibility of burials and site maintenance.
- The funeral service provider has removed the \$1,200 for burial opening and closing.
- The City does not charge anything for burials, plot purchase or upkeep fees.
- The fee for funeral service is prohibited for many families.
- Many families fundraise to pay for funeral expenses.
- Reviewed some assistance programs that are available for burials.
 - There is a gap for low income families or those who rely on social assistance.
 - Death benefits are available to those who have been regularly employed and receive a CPP death benefit in the amount of \$2,500.
 - Researched provinces and territories and determined they have assistance programs to cover the cost for funerals and burials except for Nunavut.
 - Nunavut program covers the cost of a burial through family services public guardianship order or if someone was on medical travel.
 - Nunavut residents who are on income support may not have any other support to provide for a burial.
 - This is a gap in Nunavut.
 - In other provinces if there is a death from a homicide, the victim services program would cover the cost of the burial.
 - This is a gap in Nunavut.

Mr. Lu understood that residents who die while on medical travel, the Government of Nunavut will pay for the preparation and transportation of the body to the home community, but burial costs are not covered.

Mr. Lu pointed out that some of the other provinces that are listed who provide burial costs are not comparable to Nunavut, as those provinces receive federal transfer fees. Some provinces have restricted conditions and individuals must qualify before receiving burial fees.

Ms. Elgersma pointed out that there is a fact sheet on burial coverage by the Government of Nunavut which shows the casket cost. She requested clarification on the instances when the Government of Nunavut pays for burials.

Mr. Lu noted when comparing the fact sheet to the policy document, there is confusion, and he will review both documents and provide clarification.

Mayor Bell asked what burial costs are paid by the Government of Nunavut in the other 24 communities in Nunavut in relation to burials.

Mr. Paterson advised that the hamlets pay for the burials out of their operational budget.

He noted the hamlets are not able to raise funds from taxes, where the City does have the ability to raise taxes to provide the burial service.

Mayor Bell expressed concern that even though the City is a tax-based community, all communities in Nunavut should be treated the same regarding payment of burials.

Ms. Nowdlak commented that when trying to assist grieving families, it is difficult to know what funds are available, as some families can receive assistance, while other families do not.

Mayor Bell suggested a document listing the available funding should be started and can be updated when more information is available.

Ms. Elgersma encouraged the members of the community to review some of the references in the document to understand how other provinces handle the burial fee assistance. She felt it would be beneficial for many residents in the community to see a fee assistance program for families who cannot afford to bury their loved ones. Once members become familiar with the assistance by other provinces, they will have more knowledge to help develop a fee assistance program for Iqaluit.

Martha Nowdlak and Ross Paterson left the meeting.

f. Identify Priorities and Next Steps

Councillor Akumalik and Mayor Bell felt the priorities and next steps have been determined based on the discussion above.

4. ADJOURNMENT

As there was no longer a quorum, the meeting adjourned at 1:42 p.m.




Joanasie Akumalik
Chair


Amy Elgersma
Chief Administrative Officer

Approved by Committee on the 21st day of October 2020.