

Town of Minto Cemeteries Master Plan

First Draft June 2018



Background

The Town of Minto currently has about 35 acres of cemetery land within three main facilities. Minto cemeteries are located within or close by the urban centers of Palmerston, Harriston and Clifford.

Within the limits of the Town of Minto there are six pioneer cemeteries spread in various rural areas of the municipality.

The Town's three operating cemeteries support 50 to 70 interments in total per year. Annual maintenance costs of around \$90,000 are funded roughly by 62% from burial fees and services, 15% interest from care and maintenance and 23% from property tax. This breakdown of revenue sources has varied a few percentage points depending on demand.

Using round numbers the Town can typically expect annual burial and service fees of \$55,000, \$13,000 operating interest from the Care and Maintenance Fund of \$480,000 and \$20,000 of property tax to fund the operation. The chart below shows the percentage of the operating budget typically spent on key cemetery functions as well as the 2018 approved operating budget.

	Typical % of budget	2018 budget
Staff wage & benefit allocation	20%	\$18,720 (20.8%)
Equipment Allocation	10%	\$ 8,800 (9.8%)
Grounds Maintenance	50%	\$45,350 (50.4%)
Contractor Payment	7.5%	\$ 7,000 (7.8%)
Insurance	5%	\$ 3,900 (4.3%)
Repairs, materials etc.	7.5%	\$ 6,250 (6.9%)
Total	100%	\$90,020

Strategic Plan

Cemetery care and maintenance is assigned to the Public Works Department of the Town of Minto under the strategic direction to "maintain and enhance infrastructure to protect public health and safety, prevent property damage, maintain high quality of life, and effectively manage financial resources to ensure Minto is an attractive and viable community for family living and business investment".

Action 7.8 in the Strategic Plan directs the Town to "establish cemetery management plans to assist with long term capital planning, increase visual appeal, enhance interment options, and increase cemetery use as a place to learn about the people, stories and history of the community".

The Public Works Department is responsible for cemeteries through the Roads & Drainage Foreman who is a trained horticulturalist. Reporting to him is a Lead Hand who provides day

to day supervision to five operators. All staff operators in the Roads and Drainage Section have a wide range of maintenance responsibilities outside cemeteries. The TLC Coordinator also reports to the Foreman and has two seasonal staff to care for the many planting beds and baskets throughout the Town including plantings in the cemeteries.

The current Public Works structure does not dedicate any one staff person only to cemeteries. Grass cutting is contracted out for one cut per week, and trimming once every two weeks. Other services such as tree trimming or interment preparation are contracted out if staff is dedicated to other assignments in the municipality. The Lead Hand or Supervisor will oversee the burial process.

The Town's Treasury Department manages the financial side of cemeteries including plot sales, payables and receivables according to the strategic direction to "manage Town finances in a transparent and fiscally responsible manner using a wide variety of accepted methods such as maintaining healthy reserves, investing conservatively, sensible user fees, property tax control, and responsible borrowing." The Cemeteries By-law and Provincial legislation govern use and retention of these funds.

Legislation

The main Provincial Law affecting cemeteries is the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, 2002. The Act contains a classification of cemeteries as Active, Inactive and Abandoned. All three active cemeteries in Minto accept new interments. Pioneer cemeteries do not accept interments. Under the Act, Cemeteries must be managed by an operator(s), church community or designated Cemetery board, but in cases where a designated individual or group cannot be found, the municipality within the geographic boundary is responsible.

A Cemetery can be "turned over" to a municipality to maintain which is the case in Clifford as the cemetery is actually geographically located in Howick Township. Pioneer cemeteries are considered Abandoned in that they have been long "deserted" with no operator or volunteer board. This means the municipality is the owner and assumes responsibility.

The Act requires: "Every Cemetery operator who sells, assigns or transfers Interment Rights or Scattering Rights or who permits the Interment of human remains or the scattering of cremated remains in the Cemetery shall have a care and maintenance fund or if the regulations so permit, a care and maintenance account". The amount reported in the 2018 budget is about \$480,000 of which about \$12,000 in interest is applied to operations. There are no such funds known for the Pioneer cemeteries.

The act also requires municipalities maintain and enforce by-laws relating to cemetery operations. The amalgamated Town's first by-law in 1999 was reviewed and replaced in

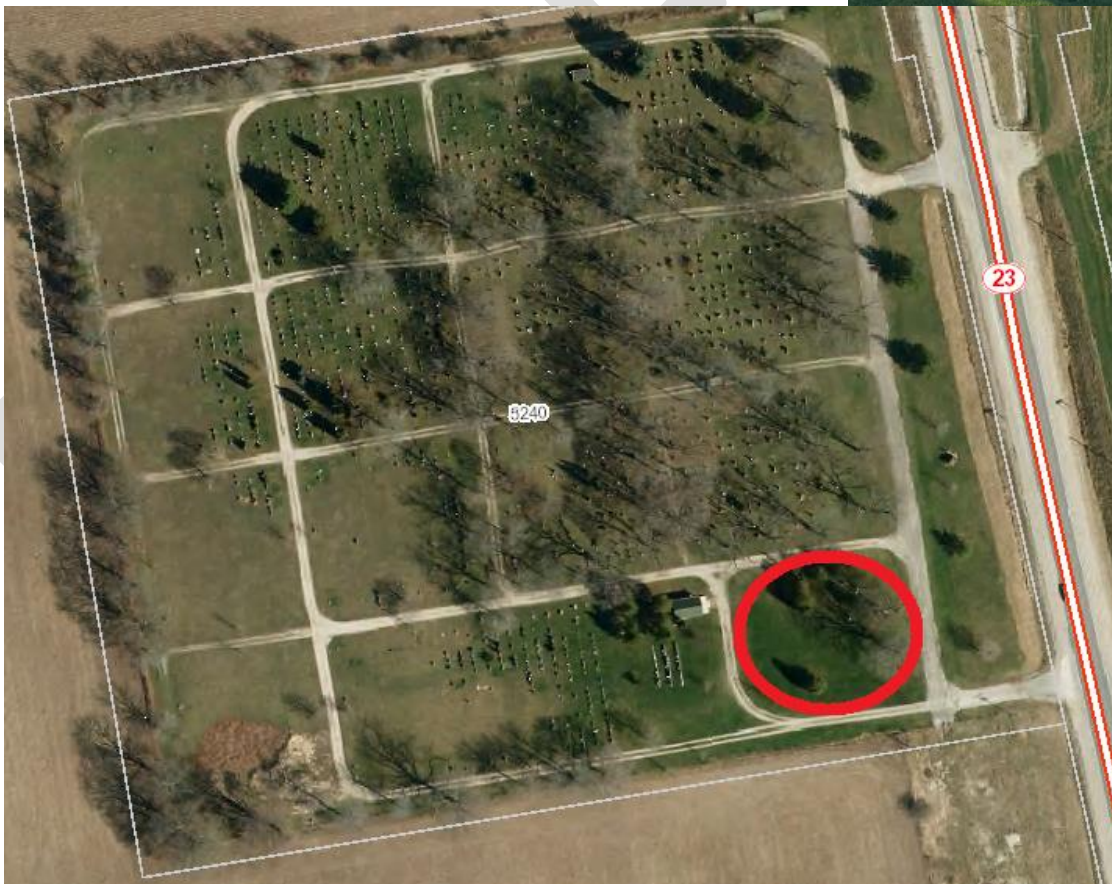
November of 2012 including new fees and charges. The 2012 bylaw is in need of review based on a public process initiated through this master plan.

Current Active Cemetery Resources

Palmerston Cemetery

This cemetery is about 11.2 acres in area with two entrances off Highway 23, a gravel ring road, and a modified grid pattern internal road network. If this cemetery were a perfect grid pattern it would roughly consist of 16 half acre sections enclosed by a ring road with three internal gravel roads running north/south and three internal roads running east/west providing access.

The original layout did not include a north/south access road on the south quarter where the chapel is located, while the most southeast section of the site is slightly smaller than a typical section in the



cemetery. There is no designated parking lot within the cemetery. Typically during a service people park on the gravel access roads or on the grass beside the roadway. Flower beds are planted by the Town and maintained by TLC staff spring through fall including weekly watering of beds and “urns” and hanging baskets within the facilities.



Tree cover consists of a mix of deciduous and coniferous species most of which were planted years ago within the original nine sections of the cemetery. Some cedar plantings by families around individual plots or crypts have over grown. In 2017 much of the undergrowth was trimmed in the facility. There is a chapel building on-site which had exterior repairs to the roof and cladding about 2012-13. The building's interior has had little maintenance, and there is no heat source or hydro which was disconnected shortly after amalgamation. There an old mechanism to lower caskets to the basement that has not been used in years and is unsafe. The basement is not suited for storage due to limited access, lack of power and shelving.

The cemetery layout provides about 8 acres of space for the estimated 7,300 total number of plots. In older areas of the cemetery there are some family plots which have been purchased and have room for future interments. There are currently no specific options to inter cremated remains in the Palmerston Cemetery other than in traditional plots. Of the 8 acres of usable space roughly 28% or about 2030 plots are available for sale not including the southeasterly section (see red circle above) across from the chapel building. This area has about 0.4 acres of usable space and has been identified by the Town as a potential location for cremated remains.



Harriston Cemetery

This is the largest cemetery in the Town with about 15 acres of area within a 45 acre parcel. The cemetery is accessed from a single entrance off Jessie Street and includes a length of



the Greenway Trail. There is a cremation garden adjacent to the chapel which is just off the Jessie Street entrance. The original cemetery is just over 9 acres bordered by a ring access road with a central circular access from which irregularly radiating gravel roadways emerge.

There is a small gravel parking lot at the chapel building near the entrance to the cemetery. During a burial service people park beside access roads or on the grass along the roadway.



Near the chapel and cremation garden, flower beds are planted and maintained by TLC staff spring through fall. This includes weekly watering of beds and “urns” within the facility.

Tree cover consists of a mix of deciduous and coniferous species most of which were planted years ago within the original cemetery. The Maitland River runs through wooded Town owned lands adjacent to the property which stretches around the cemetery including the Jessie Street entrance. Portions of the cemetery near the chapel were flooded during the 1:100 year event in 2017. There is a mixture of coniferous and deciduous growth in the woodlot. The woodlot at the entrance is low lying so it frequently is swampy such that high water levels have killed some trees. There is significant deadfall in this area due to wind and ice storms which has been cleared where possible 10 metres or so away from the road. Much of the tree undergrowth is in need of trimming.



The chapel building is one storey with a concrete floor and also has no heat or hydro source. The building had some exterior repairs including new main doors and roof in 2015, but the building's interior has had little maintenance and is primarily used for storage. The building has been used for temporary storage of remains during the winter for spring interment. Adjacent to the chapel and cremation garden is just over an acre of land set aside for additional plots. Town staff set a new ring road and prepared this adjacent to the chapel for future expansion, but proper grass cover is not established.



The Town has identified the cremation garden and chapel area as a possible site for a columbarium or similar feature as another option to inter cremated remains.

The oldest section of the cemetery has very little space remaining. There are some family plots which have been purchased and have room for future interments. Currently staff is selling plots from a section of about 289 of which 45% are occupied. Including remaining space in these two areas and the expansion underway, the Harriston cemetery can likely accommodate over 2,000 more plots plus space within the cremation garden and a potential columbarium or niche.

Clifford Cemetery

The Clifford cemetery is about 6.5 acres in area with two entrances off Highway 9 and a single entrance off County Road 1. The cemetery is roughly the shape of a right angled triangle creating three distinct triangular areas and two rectangular sections. A gravel through road links Highway 9 and County Road 1 and there is a rectangular interior access road. A small columbarium was built to the south of the chapel within the last five years.



The brick chapel building has been maintained in reasonable condition. This is a one storey brick building with a concrete floor and no heat or hydro source. There is a small gravel parking area adjacent to the chapel building which is primarily used for storage including temporary care of cremated remains pending spring interment. In 2013 the Town had the cemetery surveyed with ground penetrating radar to identify gravesites and stones throughout the facility. Inaccuracies in the original cemetery map led to site specific interments that did not match records. Staff uses mapping to assist with locating plots in the older sections of the cemetery.



Tree cover is a mix of deciduous and coniferous species most of which were planted along the main access road years ago within the original cemetery. The northwest boundary of the cemetery has the heaviest planting although there are some trees along Highway 9 that provide screening from the roadway.

There are about 3,000 plots in the Clifford cemetery. In older areas of the cemetery there are some family plots which have been purchased and have room for future interments. There are about 1900 plots available in the newer part, while the columbarium has 72 niches of which roughly 20% are sold.



Pioneer Cemeteries

There are several Pioneer Cemeteries in Minto including South Salem Pioneer Cemetery on the 3rd Line, the Salem Methodist Cemetery on the Minto Normanby Townline, the St. Thomas Roman Catholic cemetery on the 12th Line across from the former Town gravel pit, the Jerusalem Cemetery on Ayton Road near Newman Lane, the Drew Anglican Cemetery on the 16th Line and the Darroch Family Plot near Teviotdale. The grass contractor cuts the cemetery on 12th Line twice a year, while the remaining Pioneer cemeteries are maintained by nearby landowners or volunteers.



Cemetery Need Projection

Many assumptions are made to project need in cemeteries. The intent is to get a rough idea of how much space might be needed in the next 25 years. This can be done by comparing population growth, death rates and the percentage of families that might choose a Minto cemetery for their loved one.

Minto's population grew 4% between 2011 and 2016, while Ontario's population grew 4.6% in the same period. The number of deaths in Ontario increased about 10% in the same time period reflective of an aging population. Between 2011 and 2016 the percentage of deaths per total Ontario population increased 0.12%. Applying these estimates to Minto suggests about 40% of the deaths within Town boundaries are buried in one of three cemeteries. This is not an exact figure as not all interments are people who live here at this time having come from rural areas outside Minto or brought home from other places in the Country.

To get a sense of future need, applying some of these percentages to Minto cemeteries suggests the number of interments in Minto could grow from 60 or so per year in 2018 to over 100 per year in 2042. In that 25 year period Minto could expect in the range of 1800 to 2500 interments. This could consist of about 650 interments in Palmerston, 1200 in Harriston and 320 interments in Clifford.

Based on current projected demand all three cemeteries have sufficient space to accommodate well over 2500 intements in the next 25 years . Clifford has adequate capacity in its current grounds and columbarium for well beyond 25 years. Adding cremation options in Palmerston and Harriston will increase choice for consumers, slow down the need for further expansion and help control maintenance costs over time.

Minto's current initiative to have landscape architects develop design options for interring creamated remains in each of its cemeteries should go a long way toward addressing need beyond 25 years.

Capital Planning

Minto cemeteries do not generate sufficient revenues to cover the cost of any capital work. The columbarium in Clifford for example was built from donated funds. A capital plan will be developed for any new installments in Harriston or Palmerston to inter cremated remains. There is no specific five year capital plan for the cemeteries.

In the last five years capital dollars have been allocated in annual budgets for columbarium and other niche installments. Some funds had to be allocated to major ice storm cleanups in 2013 and 2015. The Town invested in the roadway in the Harriston expansion. Other funds were spent removing dated and deteriorating structures in Harriston and Palmerston.

Capital funds have not been planned or allocated for any of the chapels in either cemetery. The use of these buildings has changed considerably over many years. They are rarely used for any sort of service. The chapels in Harriston and Clifford can function for winter storage, but the building in Palmerston is not suited to this use. Without a capital plan and clear use for the chapels, deterioration is a concern.

In 2018 the Town is obtaining consulting advice to identify interment options for cremated remains that might be suited to each of the three cemeteries. The Clifford columbarium has had some use so far, while there is interest in the Harriston Cremation Garden. Recommendations and design options from the landscape architects will be reviewed with the public before being brought forward for Council approval. This work will be integrated into the cemetery master plan.

This master plan should also include a preliminary capital plan the Town could follow over the next five to ten years.

Cemetery Business

Town staff work very closely with local funeral directors to ensure each service meets the needs of grieving families. From the Town perspective this begins with acquisition of plots sometimes years before burial, preparing the gravesite for interment, providing for stone placement and restoration, and maintaining the location in perpetuity.

The Town has accommodated a few “green” interments in the past. “Green” interments or funerals have many forms. Green burials may involve such options as non-toxic embalming fluids, “biodegradable, nontoxic, and of sustainable material” shrouds or caskets, and flat rocks, plants or trees as grave markers instead of traditional cemeteries. Sections of a cemetery can be set aside for such burials where no herbicides, pesticides or irrigation is used for maintenance of the cemetery grounds. A natural or green cemetery can feature sustainable design and naturalization.

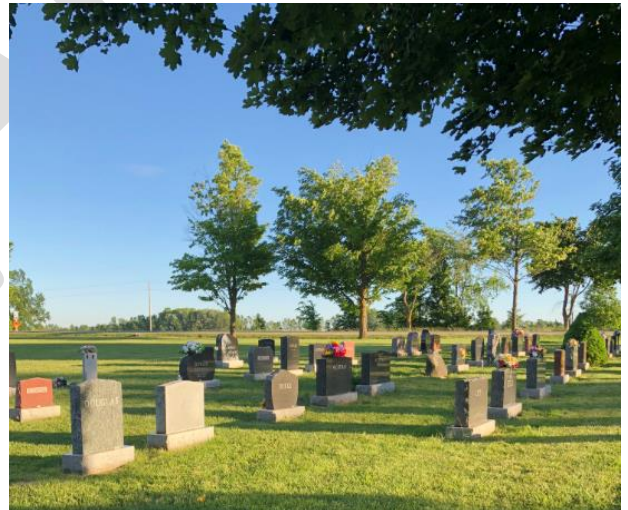
The Town has accommodated winter interments in special circumstances where there is reasonable and safe access that does not damage nearby headstones. Similarly with early spring or late fall interment the potential for damage to adjoining plots is high. When these services are requested there is added cost to the municipality which is at least in part passed on to the customer. Staff works with funeral providers and families to determine if circumstances allow a winter or early/late season burial. The Town cannot always accommodate winter burials depending on plot location snow depth and other factors.

Funeral homes have expertise and customer contact that would be beneficial to Town staff to ensure the municipal role is properly directed. Like any business or municipal operation obligations and liabilities have increased in complexity. There is regular contact between Town staff and funeral home operators, but at least one joint annual meeting could be considered.

Operational Issues

Three cemeteries in three different locations in one small rural municipality is a maintenance challenge. In the last few years concerns have been expressed by the public about issues such as the following:

- Grass cutting, trimming, clipping control
- Dressing of new interments;
- Spring settlement and groundskeeping
- Tree care and Woodlot maintenance
- Chapel Building(s) Use and Maintenance
- Monument care, trim damage, shrub and tree growth impacting stones
- Access roadway conditions
- Signage
- Mapping and technology



Families have typically not expressed concern with their interactions with staff beginning with plot purchase, billing or during interment. These interactions with staff occur at the most difficult time for many who have lost loved ones. Staff makes every effort to ensure needs are met and burials occur without incident or upset.

Almost all issues arise with cemeteries after a burial. This can include soil disruption to the gravesite during grass cutting, grass that does not grow properly, delayed maintenance after spring settlement has occurred, or poor grass cutting or trimming particularly during the spring growing season. The Town contracted out grass cutting over five years ago.

The current contract calls for one cut per week and trimming every two weeks in all three cemeteries. Often this is not enough in the spring when grass grows quickly or when rain delays contractor response. Grass care is the most visible aspect of operations. If it is done right it allows staff more time to address spring settlement, chapel maintenance and plan for future.

The cemetery master plan will make recommendations toward work plans at a standard that is affordable and acceptable to ratepayers.

Cultural Heritage and Volunteerism

Cemeteries are vestiges of the stories of the community. Many cemeteries are public spaces where people can enjoy the peace and quiet of the natural setting and contemplate their loved ones who rest there. There is a small section in Harriston outlining the resting place of community pioneers, but there has not been an organized effort to locate community leaders within the cemeteries and attempt to tell Minto's story through the history afforded in the Town's cemeteries.

The Town has made some progress bringing people to the cemeteries primarily with the Greenway Trail is one opportunity to move people through the cemetery. There are other options to be explored such as walking tours, virtual tours or genealogical work which is becoming more popular.

Many rural cemeteries are maintained by local people with a love for the community and the facility. Some cemeteries are maintained by churches or cemetery boards. It may be some maintenance issues and struggles could be helped in part by volunteerism. Volunteers could help conduct some of the historical research to bring some of Minto's stories out from the cemeteries.

Volunteers might consider adopting a cemetery or part thereof to provided added grass cutting beyond that afforded by the Town grass cutting contract. Volunteers could be organized to do an annual spring walk through to help identify maintenance issues. Cemeteries are large and complex facilities to maintain, and the eyes of the public can be very helpful directing staff to problem areas that cannot always be anticipated.

Chapel buildings no longer used for services could be a community resource offering interpretation or other public use to augment Minto's cultural heritage.

Needs and Opportunities

With three physically separate and well established cemeteries, Minto is challenged to address some of the maintenance demands from an increasingly interested public.

This section identifies some actions to help the Town plan for its cemeteries and address public concern about maintenance and long term care.

Cemetery Expansion

Action #1

Pursue the landscape architect's recommendations to inter cremated remains in the Palmerston and Harriston cemeteries to increase burial options available to the public, to make efficient use of land and to improve the design and appearance of all three cemeteries including the link between the Clifford chapel building and columbarium.

Action #2

Monitor the need and plan for in the range of 3,000 interments in the next 25 years to accommodate anticipated demand with roughly 30% of interments in Palmerston, 55% in Harriston and 15% in Clifford, and that all three facilities are maintained to continue to offer choice in Minto cemeteries.

Action #3

Identify sections of each cemetery that might be suited for more natural burial or spreading of ashes in locations with non-traditional markers, naturalized ground cover and similar environmentally friendly interments depending on customer need and appropriate design.

Operations

Action #4

Continue to contract grass cutting and trimming and if possible increase service to three cuts every two weeks in the spring season and weekly trimming as needed, and if that cannot be supplied by a contractor that the Town seek out other ways of augmenting current standards of one cut per week and trimming every two weeks.

Action #5

Host an annual round table meeting with funeral service providers each winter to discuss and respond to changing preferences in funeral and burial options, review operational issues from the previous year and plan for the next year's activities.

Action #6

Work with a qualified contractor to assess the chapel buildings in each cemetery, provide an estimate on repairs needed to retain structures in a safe and attractive fashion, and update the annual capital plan to include funding for chapel maintenance, or building removal where maintenance costs are prohibitive and no reasonable use can be determined.

Action #7

Provided repair and maintenance of chapel buildings can be reasonably accommodated in the Town's budget and there is a demonstrated demand, consider alternative uses for chapel buildings that allow for interpretation or genealogical research, storage or other such activities that ensure the buildings add value to the cemetery.

Action #8

Complete a tree inventory in the cemeteries to identify species to be retained or removed, trimmed or re-planted to minimize impact on plot layout and design, and that a regular tree trimming program is implemented to maintain tree canopy for shade with reasonable light and air to assist with cemetery maintenance.

Action #9

Continue to naturalize the woodlots on either side of Jessie Street leading to the Harriston cemetery with sufficient maintenance to minimize tree fall on the roadway, and that exterior woodlots in Clifford and Palmerston are similarly naturalized.

Action #10

That TLC staff integrate watering of new interment sites to assist with grass restoration and that the option of hydro seed is explored as a value added cost.

Action #11

That the Town review its policy for public planting and monument decoration to ensure that adjacent plots are not impacted by overgrowth, grass cutting is not made more difficult and that all families and friends have a positive experience when visiting gravesites.

Action #12

That the Town immediately replace dated signs with more appropriate and attractive signs and that a signage plan be followed to ensure signs are consistent and attractive.

Action #13

Implement a spring maintenance plan beginning with repairing previous year's interments, removal of limbs and debris, levelling, filling and dressing settled areas and access roadway repairs where possible and subject to weather conditions prior to Mother's Day, and that a cemetery spring clean-up is scheduled during spring maintenance with the public invited to walk cemeteries and help staff identify areas where specific attention may be needed.

Action #14

Provide upgraded information about cemeteries on the Town website and a link to help members of the public report maintenance issues, and that staff respond within two business days to public requests filed.

Action #15

Continue to apply asphalt millings to improve main roadways in each of the three cemeteries where material becomes available nearby so that trucking costs are minimal.

Volunteerism Heritage, Technology

Action #16

Pursue accurate digital mapping of all three cemeteries for the purposes of long term expansion planning, and where possible integrate cemetery booking documents with new technology to facilitate planning, interment and cemetery maintenance.

Action #17

Develop an “adopt a cemetery program” to assess the level of public support to assist in contributing to enhanced maintenance such as grass cutting or trimming with the Town covering such items as fuel costs and insurance.

Action #18

Work with local historical societies, community groups or organizations to develop walking or virtual tours of the cemeteries to celebrate Minto stories, pioneers, local heroes and other persons of interest buried within the three cemeteries.

Action #19

In consultation with funeral services providers and the public, update the Town cemetery by-law regarding the control, management and regulation of the Town’s three cemeteries to clarify and improve municipal and contractor responsibilities, visitor and users rights and responsibilities, standards of care, distribution of proceeds from sales and similar requirements to guide current and future staff and Council.

Action #20

Develop a program encouraging donations and benevolence toward cemeteries to help fund new columbarium, niches or other features, chapel upgrades or similar improvements

Action #21

That Minto Pioneer Cemeteries be documented, identified on the Treasures of Minto website and maintained through volunteerism where possible.

Action #22

Review the Minto Cemetery Master Plan every five years including a public meeting and consultation process involving member of the funeral services business.

Implementation

The chart below provides a tentative schedule for proceeding actions under this plan:

Action #	Notes	Priority (Low, Medium, High)	Estimated Time	Potential Cost
1	Landscape Architect Design	High	2018-19	
2	Plan for +-3,000 interments	Low	2028	
3	Naturalized environmental burials	Low	2030	
4	Increase grass cut & trim frequency	High	2019 spring	
5	Winter meeting funeral providers	High	2018 winter	
6	Chapel condition assessment	High	2019	
7	Budget to improve/remove chapels	Medium	2020-2022	
8	Tree inventory & scheduled trimming	Medium	2021	
9	Naturalize Jesse St & other woodlots	Medium	2020	
10	TLC watering and hydro seed options	High, Medium	2019	
11	Evaluate planting/decorating policy	Medium	2020	
12	Signage replacement, enhancement	High	2018	
13	Yearly spring repair before Mother's Day	High	2019 spring	
14	Electronic complaint link; 2 day response	High	2018 fall	
15	Asphalt milling internal roads	Medium	2020	
16	Digital mapping and booking	Medium	2021	
17	Adopt a cemetery program	Medium	2021	
18	Volunteer group walking/virtual tour	Low	2022	
19	Cemetery Operating Bylaw	High	2019	
20	Donation/benevolence program	Medium	2023	
21	Pioneer Cemetery Documentation	Medium/Low	2025	
22	Plan public meeting & 5 year review	High	2018 fall	