

COUNCIL DECISION ON SCATTERING CREMATED REMAINS DEFERRED

MELANIE HENNESSEY
mhennessey@metroland.com

Local residents are again raising concerns about the religious offerings being illegally left behind in Norval's McNab Park during rituals where cremated remains are scattered into the Credit River.

The sensitive topic was back on the Halton Hills council agenda Jan. 17 and debated at length. Ultimately, a staff report that recommends maintaining the status quo was deferred to a later date for further discussion as the town endeavours to work with Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) for a watershed-wide approach to the issue.

SO ARE PEOPLE CURRENTLY ALLOWED TO SCATTER CREMATED REMAINS LOCALLY?

Q

Yes, the town's parks bylaw permits this practice in Halton Hills parks, and it's also allowed on Crown land and water. It's considered a traditional part of end-of-life rituals

A

for Hindus and other religions and cultures.

But the act is not currently authorized on CVC-owned lands, or in parks in Brampton and Mississauga.

WHAT ABOUT RELIGIOUS (RIVER) OFFERINGS THAT ARE OFTEN PART OF THESE RITUALS?

The placement of river offerings — such as a fruit, religious artifacts, mementos and belongings — is prohibited by the Halton Hills parks bylaw at this time. But town staff says there have been incidents of river offerings being left behind.

THERE'S A SIGN AT MCNAB PARK IN NORVAL ON THIS TOPIC. WHAT'S THAT ALL ABOUT?

The sign explains the above details from the parks bylaw about what is and isn't permitted.

It's part of the educational approach being taken by the municipality, with town staff recommending council approve the continuation of this method to address the issue. The sign indicates that residents should call



Metroland file photo

Signs in Norval's McNab Park educate visitors on what is and isn't permitted when it comes to scattering cremated remains and river offerings.

the police non-emergency line or Service Halton Hills to report unauthorized activities.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CONCERNS THAT HAVE BEEN RAISED ON THIS TOPIC?

Director of Parks and Open Space Kevin Okimi said the biggest concern expressed is about the river offerings not being good for the environment, in addition to worries that cremated remains will have an impact on the river.

Kathy Gastle, who spoke on behalf of the Norval Community Association and Norval Women's Institute, told council the park signage isn't working.

"Sadly, now local residents must avoid broken glass, broken pottery and human remains (at McNab Park)," she said.

She noted that calling the authorities when someone is witnessed breaking the rules at the park isn't a viable option as they leave quickly.

HOW IS THE HINDU COMMUNITY RESPONDING TO THE CONCERNS?

Pandit Sharma of the Hindu Federation — which has been working with the town to address the issue — told council they're trying to educate people in the Hindu community on the topic and have posted information, along with a list of dos and don'ts, on the group's website. He said the federation is also looking at adopting some parks, which would see members assist with regular cleanups.

"I want to assure this council that we are considering all of the

options," he said.

HAS THE TOWN CONSIDERED PROHIBITING THE SCATTERING OF CREMATED REMAINS?

A report from Okimi explains staff previously reviewed a prohibitive approach, but determined it "would not be any more practical to implement, as those who choose to break the current rules will likely continue to do so. The problem would remain, but the signs would be different."

He noted that an extensive public consultation process would be required if council wanted to implement this change.

SO WHAT'S NEXT ON THIS TOPIC?

The matter was deferred to allow more time for councillors and staff to discuss solutions going forward.

Town staff is also turning to the CVC to see if it will consider revisiting its policy on the scattering of cremated remains and help with a consistent approach throughout the watershed.

The staff report could be brought back as early as the Feb. 7 council meeting, but the time frame was left open-ended.

Enjoy the freshest coffee delivered right to you!

ROASTED IN HALTON HILLS

- ✓ Direct from the Roastery
- ✓ Freshly roasted specialty coffee
- ✓ Delivered right to your door



ORDER ONLINE @ BLACKCREEKCOFFEE.COM

JANA'S
Georgeview
SINCE 1954

OPEN KITCHEN RESTAURANT

AVAILABLE FOR DINE-IN (WHEN PERMITTED) TAKEOUT AND CURBSIDE.

YOU'LL LOVE OUR HOMEMADE BREAKFAST, LUNCH AND DINNER.

We make all your favourites like Liver & Onions, Triple Decker Sandwiches and Home-made Burgers

Our Staff specialize in making you smile! Hope to see you soon!

Open for Dinner Thursday thru Sunday Ask about our fabulous specials.

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram | New hours Mon-Wed 8-3 • Thurs 8-7 • Fri-Sat 8-8 • Sun 8-4
GEORGEVIEW OPEN KITCHEN | 154 Guelph Street, Georgetown | **(905) 877-2511**