

Fate of family cemetery uncertain

Town, developers playing tug-of-war over responsibility

by Donna Danielli

No matter how many years may go by, some early residents still have input on development in the old township of Nassagaweya.

A recent public meeting held by the Town of Milton Administration and Planning Committee saw an 1831 family cemetery become a possible stumbling block for a local developer.

Tuscany Estates Development Ltd. has already completed Phase One of its subdivision in Moffat, but Phase Two requires rezoning of a three hectare piece of land from Rural (A2) to Hamlet Residential and Open Space Cemetery.

In the middle of the three hectares, above an embankment, sits the final resting place for members of the Kean family buried there when Nassagaweya was wild and untamed with no established cemeteries.

There remains to this day two monument stones; one stating that the family of Benjamin Kean and Jane McKinley are buried at the site and another unmarked stone, likely marking the grave of an infant.

The question is, who should be responsible for maintaining the cemetery?

"We're quite anxious to have the application approved," commented Mr. Tim McCabe of Green Scheels Pidgeon Planning Consultants, in reference to the rezoning which would allow Tuscany Estates to build three new residences on the lot.

"In the spirit of cooperation, we have agreed to set aside the cemetery as a separate block with direct access to the street."

Mr. McCabe suggested Tuscany Estates deed the .7 acres the cemetery rests on back to the Kean family, so they may maintain their family cemetery.

Barring that, he recommended giving the cemetery to the Town of Milton, who could then apply to have the cemetery recognized as a Public Heritage Site.

"Tuscany Estates know we're not going to be here forever," Mr. McCabe explained, "and as such, doesn't want to have responsibility for that .7 acres forever. We're trying to find a reasonable solution."

Local historian, and neighbour to Tuscany Ridge, Audrey Allison was the only other delegate to speak at the public meeting, and stressed the need to maintain the early Kean family cemetery.

"I would hate to think that at some point in time my ancestors, or even myself, will someday be dug

up and moved," she commented.

"It's a matter of preserving the history of this family. There is a road in the subdivision named for the Kean family and it would be nice for the new residents to know what the history is," stated Ms. Allison, a member of the Nasagiweya Historical Society.

Deeding the cemetery back to the Kean family is an unacceptable strategy to Ms. Allison, who also acted as the Kean family's representative that night. She informed the committee that there simply aren't enough Keans left in the area to take on the responsibility.

"Change and progress happen," said Ms. Allison, "but history should be preserved any way it can. It should be designated as a Pioneer cemetery, designated and maintained by the Town."

The Administration and Planning Committee accepted the report requesting the change in zoning, but more research will be done before a recommendation is

made to Milton Council, research that will include a preservation report by Planning Staff.

Only after Milton Council has

received and approved Ms. Allison's recommendation will the fate of the Kean family remains be determined.




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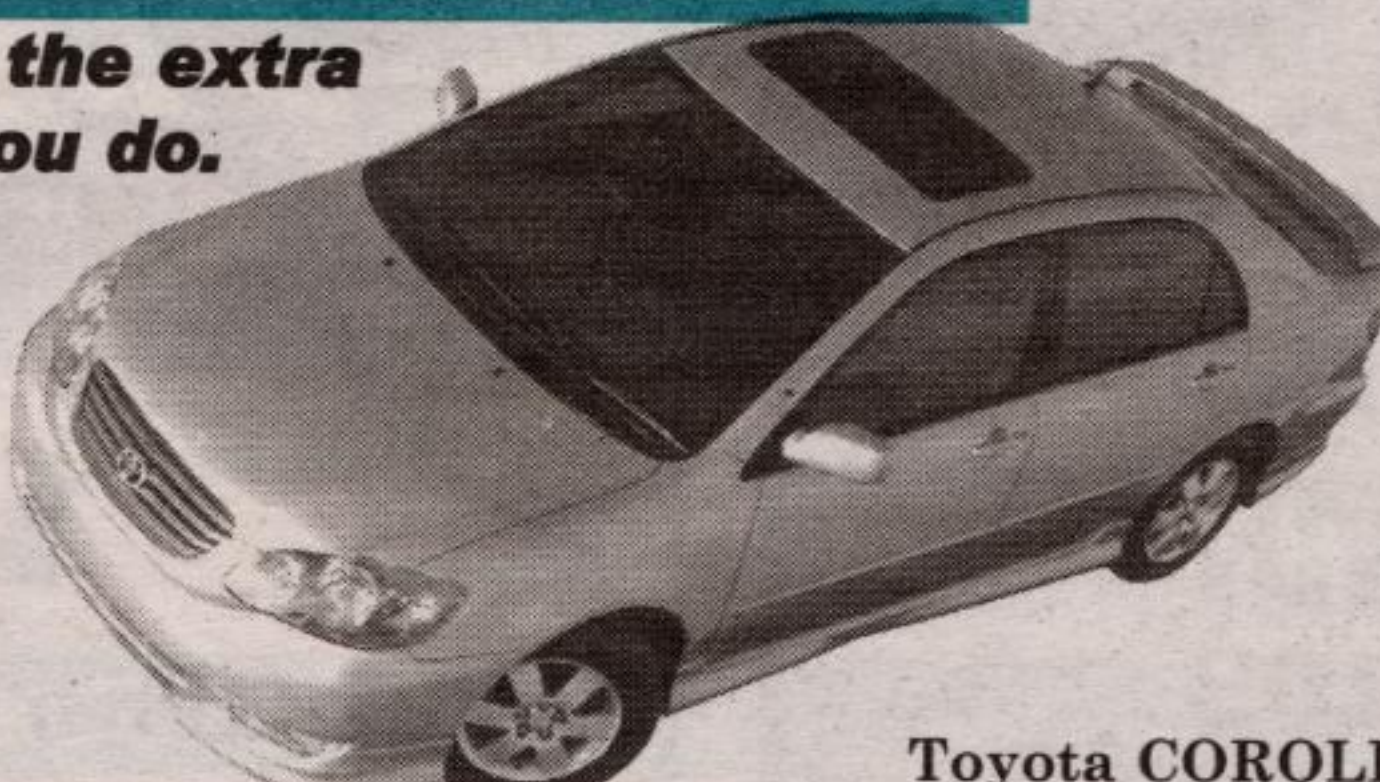
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