

Doctor seeks 200th anniversary clean-up of Stewart family plot

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Dr. Carl Rubino wants the Stewart family's memorial cemetery plot to get the spit shine it deserves for Perth's 200th anniversary.

Rubino appeared before Perth town council's committee of the whole meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 1, to ask for the town's help in securing some funding to restore the J.A. Stewart memorial cemetery plot at the Elmwood Cemetery, behind the Home Hardware.

It is the "largest family plot in Elmwood," he surmised during his presentation. Several of the stones in the plot are "covered with stone algae of some sort," he said. The Celtic cross, which he estimates stands between 15 and 18 feet tall, is something he would like to "look into the possibility of having this restored."

Mayor John Fenik told Rubino that the town's heritage committee used to have a fund of \$1,500 set aside to restore stones that fell down at the Old Burying Ground, but, as this plot was in Elmwood, he was not sure that the Stewart plot would be eligible.



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A photograph of the photograph handed out by Dr. Carl Rubino to members of town council on Dec. 1, showing the algae growing on the Celtic cross of the Stewart family plot at Elmwood Cemetery.

"Technically, the family would own the stones," said Rubino. However, "nobody seems to know if there are any existing family members," since J.A. and Jessie Stewart did not have any kids, and her sister was, what was known then, a "spinster."

"I can't imagine that anyone would

say no," said Rubino, to the Stewart stones being prettied up.

"The Stewart name carries a lot of weight in this town," said Coun. Jim Graff. "This is the type of project we want to encourage in town. It may not be centre stage... but it is important. As a Perhite, I appreciated the value that they Stewart family contributed to this community."

Rubino told the politicians that the lead lettering on some of the stones can be replaced, and the algae removed from the cross and other stones.

"The cross is a little more difficult because it requires scaffolding," said Rubino.

He estimated the overall cleaning cost at about \$2,800, an investment he said would be worthwhile at the best of times, but especially with the 200th anniversary looming next year, when "many people will be coming back," to take part in the celebrations.

In order to help with the costs, Coun. Jim Boldt said that, upon hearing of Rubino's plans, that they may want to contribute to the beautification.

"I'd like to move this to the budget (deliberation process)," said Deputy Mayor John Gemmill. "If we do this now, this week, next week there could be another worthy cause," seeking funding. He asked that a staff report be prepared on the matter.

"There are a lot of old grave stones (in Perth)," said Fenik. "A lot of old families. I don't want to put cold water on this," he said, but he did not want to see "a line up out the door," of families seeking help with restoring old gravestones.

Time is not of the essence now due to the season.

"There's no way this work could be done now," said Rubino, who is all ready to commit \$1,200 of his own money to the project, with the town contributing to the remaining balance.

"It can be done," he said.

Coun. Jim Boldt remarked that the conversation was a good segue to improving the condition of the graves of the two men involved in the last fatal duel ever held in what is now Canada, in Perth, at the Old Burying Ground – but, he admitted, that is "a discussion for another day."