

My name is Holly Newman, of 7300 Camino Tassajara, and I'm speaking on behalf of Friends of Tassajara Valley, an informal alliance of residents and friends united against the construction of the proposed Creekside Memorial Park cemetery in the Tassajara Valley. Tonight I'd like to address the comments made by Mr. Abram Wilson at the San Ramon City Council meeting on April 10.

- First, Mr. Wilson talked about the proposed cemetery as though it were a 'done deal,' but that isn't the case. A lot of problems were found with its Draft Environmental Impact Report, which was published last September. And the project was formally suspended by Contra Costa County two months ago, due to issues with ownership of part of the site.
- Mr. Wilson is to be commended for stating that the proposed cemetery is not to be a financial burden on the city. But the likelihood of it being a financial burden is actually very high. In fact, this site is not really suitable for a cemetery at all - most of it is taken up by a ridge with very steep slopes, and of the existing flat areas, the largest are in a 100-year flood plain. So it would be very expensive to put a cemetery here, and also to operate it. On the income side, it could take a long time before the expected three burials per day, seven days per week, actually happens, since most people want to be buried in the same location where other family members are already buried. This means that this proposed cemetery could be a financial burden for many years.
- You may be thinking, what about the lack of cemetery space in the area? Don't we need this? While it's true that there are no cemeteries in San Ramon or Danville, there are actually 18 cemeteries within a 15-mile radius of the proposed cemetery, and four of these have enough capacity to meet all the expected burial needs for 50 years or more. And given the large (and increasing) shift to cremations, they will probably last much longer.

- And while most of us think of a cemetery as a peaceful, grassy, ‘open space’ kind of use, this proposed cemetery would not be like that. Although Mr. Wilson accurately stated that about 70% of the 221 acre site would be ‘open space,’ the remaining 30%, or 60 acres, would be developed in a fashion totally inconsistent with open space. The plans show many oversized structures, totaling over 60,000 square feet, plus about 13 acres of impervious area (roads, 82-space parking lots, and more). This kind of urban development is not what the San Ramon voters want for the Tassajara Valley, as they strongly showed with the resounding defeat of Measure W last fall.
- In addition, this proposed cemetery would destroy a prominent ridgeline that is visible up and down Camino Tassajara and from the Windemere Hidden Valley trail, by removing up to 30 feet from the top and putting cemetery structures on the new, flat surface.
- And last but not least, its water use would be huge and unsustainable. The DEIR states it would be a “significant and unavoidable” environmental impact, even after mitigation.

To conclude, given all of the pressing needs that you, the City Council, are trying to address in these difficult times, it makes no sense for you to commit any of the City’s money, or the taxpayer’s money, on this environmentally flawed, unneeded, and financially risky proposal.

Thank you.