

**Township of South Stormont**  
ACTION REQUEST  
Administration and Corporate Services



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**To:** Council  
**From:** Loriann Harbers, Director of Corporate Services/Clerk  
**Date of Meeting:** December 15, 2021  
**Subject:** 2022 Cemetery Improvement Grants

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**Recommendation:**

That Council authorize the following Cemetery Improvement Grants for the purpose of stone refurbishment and repair for 2022:

Waterdown Cemetery - \$5,000

Dixon Cemetery - \$5,000

Further, that Council instructs that the stone restoration and repair be coordinated by the Township in conjunction with the cemetery operators.

And further, that Council authorize a one-time Cemetery Improvement Grant in the amount of \$5,000 for the purpose of fence replacement and/or repair in 2022 to the Pleasant Valley Cemetery.

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**Executive Summary:**

This report provides a summary of each Cemetery Improvement Grant application received in 2021 and recommends the approval of grants to Waterdown Cemetery, Dixon Cemetery and Pleasant Valley Cemetery for work to be completed in 2022. Further, this report recommends that operations funds be used in 2022 to complete stone refurbishment and repair work at the Township operated Willis Cemetery.

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**Background:**

The Cemetery Improvement Grant Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) indicates that Applications can be received for improvements and/or repair to a Cemetery, including but not limited to, stone refurbishment, landscaping repair and fence repair. Funds are not available for regular maintenance costs. Applications can be made up to a maximum of \$5,000 per Cemetery per year.

Pursuant to the SOP, The Director of Corporate Services/Clerk, Director of Parks and Recreation, CAO and Deputy Clerk have reviewed applications and based on available funding, number of applications received, demonstrated need and existing funds, have made a recommendation for Council's consideration and approval.

This fall, the Township received three (3) external applications for funding under the Cemetery Improvement Grant program in addition to the application prepared by staff to undertake stone improvements at one cemetery which falls under the administrative care of the Township.

In addition to reviewing the submitted applications, Township staff conducted a site visit of each cemetery to ensure that the requests for assistance were understood.

Below is a summary of each application received and overview of staff's recommendation:

### Willis Cemetery

Purpose of Grant: Stone refurbishment and repair

Amount of grant request: \$5,000.00

Applicant: Township of South Stormont



### Summary and Recommendation:

The Willis Cemetery is an inactive cemetery approximately 1 acre in size. This cemetery is under the administrative care and control of the Township. Staff and contractors identified many concerns with stone markers in 2019 and although this cemetery was included in the Township's initial grant application for restoration work at three cemeteries, the approved funding was only sufficient to complete work at the two of the three sites (Stata and Northfield cemeteries) in 2020.

After a full review of the applications received for 2022, the Township has withdrawn its application for funding under the grant program. Township staff recommend that the sum of \$5,000.00 be used from the Parks and Recreation operating budget toward restoration work at the Willis Cemetery. Allocating funds through the operations budget will ensure that restoration work for this cemetery can be completed while maintaining funds for the volunteer operated cemeteries located in the Township. The initial restoration work will focus on addressing the stone markers posing health and safety concerns at the site. It is important to note that restoration work at this site will take many years to complete.



### Waterdown Cemetery

Purpose of Grant: Stone refurbishment and repair

Amount of grant request: \$5,000.00

Applicant: External - Volunteer cemetery operator



The Waterdown Cemetery is an active cemetery approximately 1.20 acres in size. This cemetery is operated by volunteers with the Township providing grass mowing at the site as part of the grass mowing tender. There are numerous stones in need of repair and supporting documentation provided with the application demonstrates a financial need for completing repair work. In addition, staff have been working with representatives from the cemetery to address administrative concerns identified in previous years.

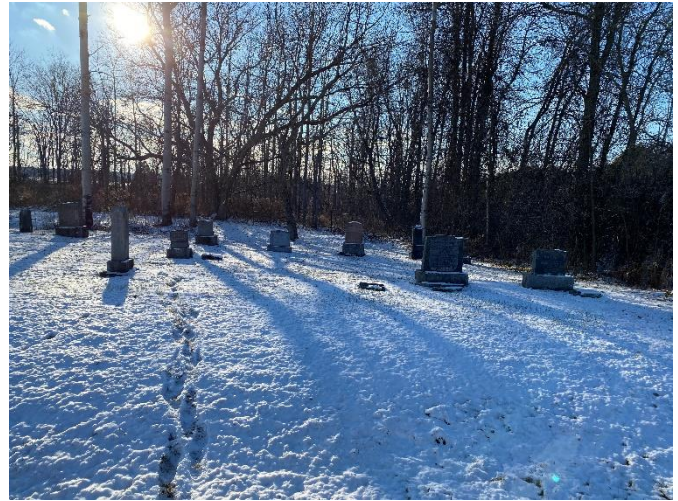
Based on the steps taken by the representatives to date, staff recommend the approval of a grant in the sum of \$5,000 to undertake work in 2022, provided that the cemetery operator continues to resolve the administrative issues. Further, to realize cost savings and efficiencies, staff recommend that the Director of Parks and Recreation work in conjunction with the operator to coordinate the stone repair work using the contractors who will perform repair work at the Township cemetery site. Due to the extensive repair work required, the initial restoration work will focus on addressing the stone markers posing health and safety concern. It is important to note that restoration work at this site will take many years to complete.

### Dixon Cemetery

Purpose of Grant: Stone refurbishment and repair, landscape repair

Amount of grant request: \$5,000.00

Applicant: External - Volunteer cemetery operator



#### Summary and Recommendation:

The Dixon Cemetery is an inactive cemetery approximately 0.25 acres in size. The cemetery appears to be well maintained by the volunteers that operate the site independent of the Township. A visual inspection of the site confirms that there are several stones in need of repair. The need for landscaping repair was difficult to determine based on conditions at the time of inspection. Further, supporting documentation provided with the application demonstrates a financial need for completing repair work.

Staff recommend that a grant be approved for the Dixon Cemetery to complete restoration work up to a maximum of \$5,000.00, if necessary. Further, to realize potential cost savings, staff recommend that the Director of Parks and Recreation work in conjunction with the operator to coordinate the stone repair work using the contactors who will perform repair work at the other sites. Should the full grant amount not be required, it will remain in the Cemetery Reserve Fund.

#### Pleasant Valley Cemetery

Purpose of Grant: Fence replacement

Amount of grant request: \$10,000.00 (\$5,000.00 annually over two years)

Applicant: External - Volunteer cemetery operator





### Summary and Recommendation:

The Pleasant Valley Cemetery is an active cemetery approximately 9 acres in size. A visual inspection of the site confirms that aside from issues identified with the fence, the cemetery appears to be well maintained by the volunteers that operate the cemetery. Further, supporting documentation provided with the application demonstrates a financial need for completing repair work. However, the financials submitted also demonstrate that the cemetery could benefit from a review of its financial management to support its own financial longevity, especially since the cemetery is still active.

The criteria outlined in the Cemetery Improvement Grant SOP provides that applications may be submitted for “fence repair” but does not specifically outline “fence replacement” on the list of authorized improvements. Despite this fact, the cemetery has demonstrated a financial need and providing some assistance for fence repair is within the scope of the program. Therefore, staff recommend the approval of a one-time grant in the sum of \$5,000.00 to undertake fence repair work in 2022 at the Pleasant Valley Cemetery.

### Other considerations:

As staff have now been through the Cemetery Improvement Grant process on several occasions, issues have been identified with the SOP and corresponding application. Some of the issues and proposed changes include:

1. The requirement to obtain two cost estimates. Staff experience indicates that because of a lack of professionals in the stone marker restoration business, the requirement to obtain two quotes is unreasonable.
2. The requirement for 2 years financial statements. Many of the inactive cemeteries do not have formal financial statements but do maintain bank accounts. Provisions to account for this should be included in the SOP.

3. There are no provisions in the current SOP to ensure that the cemeteries receiving grant funding are in compliance with the legislation. Although the Township does not have the authority to enforce the legislation, adding provisions to confirm general compliance with the legislation (ie. requirement to submit a copy of the cemetery by-laws etc.) should be investigated.
4. Including provisions to indicate that, when practical, the Township may recommend that work be coordinated by the Township in conjunction with the operator to complete stone repair work. Since the Township will likely be completing restoration work at its own sites for many years, costs saving can be realized using a coordinated approach.

Staff intend to review the SOP in further detail in 2022 and will report back to Council.

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**Alignment with Community Strategic Plan:**

Goal 1: Corporate Capacity

Objective 1.1: Implement Service Delivery and Policies Review

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**Risk and Asset Management Considerations:**

Supporting cemetery restoration efforts reduces liability for the Township in both the short and long term by mitigating health and safety concerns created by damaged stones. Further, providing regular support assists in maintaining operational independence and helps to ensure that cemetery sites are in good condition in the event that the Township is required to assume operations in the future.

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**Options:**

1. That Council approve the funding for the recommended 2022 Cemetery Improvement Grants as outlined in this report, in the total amount of \$15,000. This is the recommended option.
2. Other.

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**Financial Impact:**

Cemetery Improvement Grant Applications are funded from the Cemetery Improvement Reserve Fund. Since 2016, \$5,000 per year has been allocated to reserves, for a total of \$30,000 to date.

Repairs to the Willis United Church/North Lunenburg Road Cemetery will be paid from the Parks and Recreation operating budget to a maximum of \$5,000.00.

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**Others Consulted:**

CAO

Director of Parks and Recreation

*Prepared by: Ashley Sloan, Deputy Clerk*