Agenda – Council – February 24, 2022

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development, Heritage and Downtown Development – January 17, 2022

Item No. 1 Waiving of Costs for Field of Honour Interments

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On February 16, 2022, the Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and submitted the following to Council:

1. That this report be received as information.

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development, Heritage and Downtown Development – January 17, 2022

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On February 16, 2022, the Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and submitted the matter to Council.

On January 19, 2022, the Executive Policy Committee laid the matter over for 30 days.

STANDING COMMITTEE:

On January 17, 2022, due to a tie vote, the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development, Heritage and Downtown Development submitted the matter to the Executive Policy Committee and Council without recommendation.

COUNCIL DECISION:

On November 25, 2021, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development, Heritage and Downtown Development and adopted the following:

1. That the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to report back within 90 days on the following:

    A. Amendments to the Cemeteries By-law No. 130/2007 to ensure that any person who meets the qualification to be interred in a Field of Honour, shall be permitted to receive a plot at no cost.

    B. An annual average cost estimate.

2. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development, Heritage and Downtown Development – January 17, 2022

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

COUNCIL DECISION (continued):

On October 28, 2021, Council ruled automatic referral of the following motion to the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development, Heritage and Downtown Development:

Moved by Councillor Nason,
Seconded by Councillor Gillingham,

WHEREAS Remembrance Day marks the sacrifice of the many who have fallen in service of their country and the courage of those who still serve;

AND WHEREAS many municipalities, including the City of Winnipeg, have dedicated space in Fields of Honour reserved only for the interment of persons who have qualified military service;

AND WHEREAS the Brookside Field of Honour at the Brookside Cemetery is one of the largest and oldest military interment sites in Canada;

AND WHEREAS the Transcona Cemetery also has a separate Field of Honour where veterans are interred;

AND WHEREAS the Cemeteries By-law No. 130/2007 establishes criteria for interments in all municipal cemeteries, including the Fields of Honour;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to report back on the following:

    A. Amendments to the Cemeteries By-law No. 130/2007 to ensure that any person who meets the qualification to be interred in a Field of Honour, shall be permitted to receive a plot at no cost.

    B. An annual average cost estimate.

2. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: Waiving of Costs for Field of Honour Interments

Critical Path: Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development, Heritage and Downtown Development – Executive Policy Committee – Council

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
M. Pittet	J. Kiernan	N/A	M. Jack

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Public Service was directed to explore the waiving of fees for interments within the Field of Honour at both Brookside and Transcona Cemeteries.

Ensuring that all Veterans to be interred within the Field of Honour receive a lot at no cost would result in an annual average cost to the City of Winnipeg of $15,963. Should Council wish to also waive the 'Interment (Opening and Closing) Fee', an additional annual average cost to the City of Winnipeg of $6,503 would be incurred. This does not include waiving other potential fees that may be applicable in some circumstances (i.e. weekend interment fee, etc.). It also does not include fees associated with the interment of immediate family members within the same lot as the Veteran or the interment of cremated remains in the Rock of Ages – an above-ground Columbaria structure that is reserved for Veterans within the Field of Honour.

It is important to note that, in recent years, Cemeteries has required mill rate support of more than $700,000 annually.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That this report be received as information.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

On November 25, 2021, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development, Heritage and Downtown Development and adopted the following:

1. That the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to report back within 90 days on the following:
    A. Amendments to the Cemeteries By-law No. 130/2007 to ensure that any person who meets the qualification to be interred in a Field of Honour, shall be permitted to receive a plot at no cost.

B. An annual average cost estimate.

2. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no immediate implications associated with this recommendation. Should Council wish to waive the 'Property Purchase Fee' and/or the 'Interment (Opening and Closing) Fee' or any other related fees, an amendment to Cemeteries By-law No. 130/2007 will need to be prepared and approved by Council. The financial implications associated with this amendment are estimated at between $15,000 and $20,000 annually, which will result in increased annual mill rate support for Cemeteries operations.

HISTORY/DISCUSSION

The City of Winnipeg currently owns and operates three cemeteries – Brookside, St. Vital and Transcona – of which both Brookside and Transcona include a Field of Honour. The Field of Honour at Brookside Cemetery is the oldest (the first interment took place in 1914) and one of the largest of its kind in Canada, serving as the final resting place for more than 10,000 Veterans, Peacekeepers, Merchant Mariners and others with military service. More than 300 Veterans have been interred in the Field of Honour at Transcona Cemetery since the first interment took place in 1923.

There are a number of specific rules and regulations that apply to the Field of Honour. For example, the initial interment is only permitted for persons who have qualified military service. Additionally, interment of the cremated remains of one immediate family member is permitted in the same lot after the Veteran has been interred. It is also important to note that each lot can accommodate one headstone to memorialize the Veteran and one additional flat marker to memorialize a family member interred within the lot. The military headstone must adhere to the detailed specifications prepared by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

There are a number of different types of fees that may apply to an interment within the Field of Honour, as described below.

Property Purchase Fee

The property purchase fee for a lot within the Field of Honour is currently set at $1,565. This fee is more than 40% below the fee charged for similar lots in other sections of Brookside and Transcona Cemeteries ($2,670). Additionally, the fee is generally in line with the average of comparative municipal cemeteries. For example, the City of Calgary charges $1,795, The City of Saskatoon charges $1,790 and the City of Regina charges $930. The City of Stonewall provides a plot at no cost to Veterans who were residents of the town at the time of their death.

Each Field of Honour lot is 4' X 10' and can accommodate the interment of the Veteran (traditional casket or cremated remains) and one immediate family member (cremated remains). Over the last five years, an average of 10.2 Field of Honour lots have been sold each year – 7.6 at Brookside Cemetery and 2.6 at Transcona Cemetery (see Table 1, below). These lots can be purchased at the time of need (when the Veteran passes) or pre-need (in advance of death).

Ensuring that all Veterans to be interred within the Field of Honour receive a lot at no cost would result in an annual average cost to the City of Winnipeg of $15,963 (an average of 10.2 Field of Honour lots sold each year at a cost of $1,565 per lot).

Table 1: Field of Honour – Annual Lot Sales (2016-2020)

	Brookside	Transcona	Total
2016	10	1	11
2017	9	3	12
2018	3	0	3
2019	7	5	12
2020	9	4	13
5-year Average	**7.6**	**2.6**	**10.2**

Interment (Opening and Closing) Fee

An opening and closing fee is charged at the time of the interment, which covers the digging/filling of the grave. This fee is currently set at $1,180 for a casket interment and $505 for the interment of cremated remains. This fee is charged for both the interment of the Veteran, as well as an immediate family member should they be buried alongside the Veteran.

Because lots can be purchased at-need or pre-need, an interment may follow days, months, years or even decades after the initial purchase. For this reason, the number of interments does not typically align with the number of lots sold in a given year. Over the last five years, an average of 8.6 Veterans have been interred within the Field of Honour each year – 6.8 at Brookside Cemetery and 1.8 at Transcona Cemetery (see Table 2). This includes a combination of traditional casket interments and cremation interments.

Ensuring that all Veterans can be interred within the Field of Honour at no cost (waiving of the Interment fee) would result in an annual average cost to the City of Winnipeg of $6,503 (an average of 8.6 Veterans interred within the Field of Honour each year at a cost of $1,180 for a casket interment and $505 for the interment of cremated remains).

Table 2: Field of Honour – Annual Veteran Interments (2016-2020)

	Brookside			Transcona			Total		
	Casket	Cremation	Total	Casket	Cremation	Total	Casket	Cremation	Total
2016	3	6	9	0	0	0	3	6	9
2017	5	5	10	0	3	3	5	8	13
2018	3	0	3	0	1	1	3	1	4
2019	1	4	5	1	3	4	2	7	9
2020	3	4	7	0	1	1	3	5	8
5 Year Average	**3.0**	**3.8**	**6.8**	**0.2**	**1.6**	**1.8**	**3.2**	**5.4**	**8.6**

Other Fees and Considerations

There are a number of other fees that may apply, including: 'Interment and Seasonal Accessibility and Reinstatement Fee' for interments during the winter season ($133); 'Weekend Service Fee' ($955 for casket and $335 for cremation); and 'Late Funeral Fees' ($186); among others. These fees are only charged when applicable and are intended to provide full cost recovery for the City.

In addition to the interment of the Veteran, the cremated remains of a family member may also be interred with them in the same lot. This accounts for an average of 14.4 additional cremation interments each year within the Field of Honour (see Table 3). An Interment (Opening and Closing) Fee is charged at that time.

Table 3: Field of Honour – Annual Family Member Cremation Interments (2016-2020)

	Brookside	Transcona	Total
2016	12	2	14
2017	13	3	16
2018	14	4	18
2019	9	3	12
2020	10	2	12
5 Year Average	**11.6**	**2.8**	**14.4**

The Field of Honour is also home to the Rock of Ages – an above-ground columbaria structure that is reserved for Veterans. On average, two or three Veterans are inurned within this structure each year. The cost to purchase a niche unit within the Rock of Ages is $3,230, with an additional $383 to inurn the remains.

It is important to note that the Last Post Fund offers a number of programs that may provide the Veteran and their family with financial assistance. For example, the Funeral and Burial Program provides financial support toward funeral and burial expenses, with eligibility based on military service and financial criteria. Additionally, an Unmarked Grave Program is available to eligible Veterans whose grave has not had a permanent headstone or foot marker for five years or more and who had not previously received funeral and burial funding from the Last Post Fund or Veterans Affairs Canada.

It is also important to note that, in recent years, Cemeteries have required mill rate support of more than $700,000 annually. Should Council wish to move forward on waiving the property purchase fee and/or interment fee for Veterans within the Field of Honour, increased mill rate support would be required.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement Date: December 7, 2021

Project Name:

Waiving of Costs for Field of Honour Interments

COMMENTS:

As this report is to be received as information, there are no direct associated financial imiplications. Should Council decide to waive fees as decribed in the report, additional mill rate support in the range of $15,000 to $20,000 per annum would be required.

Mike McGinn Dec. 7, 2021

Mike McGinn, CPA, CA
Manager of Finance

CONSULTATION

This Report has been prepared in consultation with:

N/A

OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

This report aligns with the following Directions and Enabling Strategies from *OurWinnipeg* section 01-3 (Prosperity):

- Enabling Strategy: Monitor and evaluate policy decisions, programs and services, budget allocation and development activity from a long-term sustainability perspective (page 51).

Additionally, the report aligns with the following Directions and Enabling Strategies found in Section 02-3 (Heritage):

- Direction 2: Conserve, protect and celebrate the significant heritage resources that illustrate the broad range of Winnipeg's heritage values (page 69).
- Enabling Strategy: Recognize the importance of a broad range of tangible and intangible heritage resources throughout the city that illustrate a unique sense of place and community pride (page 69).

WINNIPEG CLIMATE ACTION PLAN ALIGNMENT

N/A

WINNIPEG POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

This report most closely aligns with the following goal from the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Strategy:

Goal 6: All City Services are Equitable, Inclusive and Accessible.

SUBMITTED BY

Department: Planning, Property, and Development
Division: Real Estate and Land Development, Cemeteries Branch
Prepared by: Brett Shenback
Date: December 9, 2021
File No: N/A