

# Town of Whitby

## Staff Report

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### Report Title: Public Engagement Feedback for Pioneer Baptist Cemetery Name Change

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**Report to:** Committee of the Whole

**Date of meeting:** September 16, 2024

**Report Number:** FS 39-24

**Department(s) Responsible:**

Financial Services Department

**Submitted by:**

Fuwing Wong, Commissioner, Financial Services/Treasurer

**Acknowledged by M. Gaskell,  
Chief Administrative Officer**

**For additional information, contact:**

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#### 1. Recommendation:

1. That public engagement feedback received for the proposed Pioneer Cemetery Name Change to the Dryden Cemetery be received; and,
2. That the Groveside Cemetery Board and staff be authorized to initiate the name change with the Bereavement Authority of Ontario and execute all documents to implement the cemetery name change.

#### 2. Highlights:

- Town of Whitby Council approved the name change of the Pioneer Baptist Cemetery to the Dryden Cemetery in 2023 subject to public notice and review of any written objections received;
- The Town initiated the public notice for the proposed name change and received five written comments from the public (outlined in this report);
- Concerns/comments from the public are addressed in this report, and staff and the Groveside Cemetery Board recommend proceeding with the cemetery name change;
- Subject to Council approval of this report, the Groveside Cemetery Board and Town staff will initiate the name change process with the Bereavement Authority of Ontario.

### 3. Background:

In 2023, Town of Whitby Council approved the Groveside Cemetery Board's request to change the name of the Pioneer Baptist Cemetery to the Dryden Cemetery via the [September 25, 2023 Staff Report FS 21-23](#). As noted in the Staff Report, the recommended the name change for the cemetery located near the South-East corner of Columbus Road and Thickson Road to reflect the history of the area, the name of a prominent local family who were long-time benefactors of the cemetery, and to reflect a more inclusive/non-denominational name. There are approximately 132 plots still available at this cemetery and the proposed name change may appeal to the broader public.

#### *The Groveside Cemetery Board*

The Groveside Cemetery Board (the "**Board**") is an advisory committee created by Council. The Board is governed by the Funeral, Burial, and Cremation Services Act, 2002. Currently, the Board is comprised of six (6) citizen appointments\*, one (1) Member of Council, and one (1) staff liaison. The Board's mandate, based on the Terms of Reference for this advisory committee is as follows:

1. Ensure the effective operation, maintenance and beautification of the Groveside Cemetery, Pioneer Baptist Cemetery, Myrtle Cemetery, Hubbell Cemetery, the Hemingway Monument and other cemeteries that fall within the responsibility of the Town of Whitby;
2. To supervise and manage the business and administrative matters of the Groveside Cemetery Board; and,
3. Ensure that all operations and proceedings of the Groveside Cemetery Board comply with the *Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, 2002*, as amended.

\*Only the appointed citizen Board members may vote on Groveside Cemetery Board matters.

#### *The Bereavement Authority of Ontario*

The Bereavement Authority of Ontario (the "**BAO**") was established as a Delegated Administrative Authority on January 16, 2016, under the *Safety and Consumer Statutes Administration Act, 1996*. The BAO administers provisions of the *Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, 2002* which is consumer protection legislation respecting funerals, burials, cremations and related services within the province of Ontario.

### 4. Discussion:

Public notice of and an opportunity for the public to comment on the proposed cemetery name change was provided over a period of 60-days from June 10, 2024 to August 9, 2024\*\* as follows:

- Sign posted at the gate of the cemetery;

- A media release was prepared and the proposed name change was [reported in the local news media](#);
- Website created ([www.connectwhitby.ca/cemetery](http://www.connectwhitby.ca/cemetery)) to provide more information and an opportunity for members of the public to register comments, written objections.

\*\*Due to the Town of Whitby labour disruption in the Fall 2023, the public engagement for the proposed cemetery name change was delayed to 2024.

As of the close of the comment period, June 10, 2024, the Town received five (5) comments:

- A) One (1) person commented that they have no concerns about the proposed name change;
- B) Four (4) people commented that they have concerns, summarized as follows (note: there are more than four (4) comments below as some people provided more than one point in their written responses):
  - It may be more difficult for family/genealogists to trace ancestors if the name of the cemetery changes;
  - Concern about labelling things from the past as “bad”;
  - Concern about using taxpayer money for the name change/this should not be a priority for the Town; and
  - Comment that people do not make decisions on where to bury family members based on the name of a cemetery.

The comments were shared with the Chair of the Board. As noted above, the Board recommended the name change to the Dryden Cemetery to reflect the history of the area, the family name of long-time benefactors of the cemetery, and to reflect a more inclusive/non-denominational name. Further, cemetery name changes are generally identified/quickly resolved through internet searches. Staff will also consult with the BAO on best practices for cemetery name changes. Finally, aside from costs related to the public notice, the costs related to the cemetery name change will be paid by the Groveside Cemetery Board, which is mainly funded from the cemetery-related revenues and an annual operating grant from the Town of Whitby.

Accordingly, it is recommended that the Groveside Cemetery Board and staff be authorized to initiate the name change with the Bereavement Authority of Ontario and execute all documents to implement the cemetery name change.

## 5. Financial Considerations:

Aside from the cost of the sign, \$70.06 inclusive of HST, that was part of the Town’s public notification/communication, the cost of the name change will be paid by the Groveside Cemetery Board.

## 6. Communication and Public Engagement:

Please see other sections of this report.

**7. Input from Departments/Sources:**

Please see other sections of this report.

**8. Strategic Priorities:**

N/A

**9. Attachments:**

N/A