



WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY REPORT

Information ☐	Recommendation ☐	Decision Request ☒	Councillor Activity ☐
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To: West Hants Regional Municipality Committee of the Whole

Submitted by: Kathy Kehoe, Director Community Development

Date: November 4, 2024

Subject: Sainte-Famille Cemetery Transfer of Ownership

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Municipal Government Act, Section 65, Powers to expend funds for a municipal purpose.

DECISION REQUEST

It is asked that the Committee provide staff with the direction that it would like to see for the West Hants Historical Society and the Sainte-Famille property ownership request made by the Les Amis de Grand-Pre.

BACKGROUND

Property ☐	Public Opinion ☐	Environment ☐	Social ☐	Economic ☒	Councillor Activity ☐
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Correspondence received from Sally Ross dated April 12, 2024, requesting the West Hants Regional Municipality take ownership of the Sainte-Famille Cemetery.

At the July 9th Committee of the Whole Meeting a report was received from Councillor Smith requesting consideration of the transfer of lands to the municipality.

Direction was given for staff to meet with the West Hants Historical Society to determine if they would have an interest in taking ownership of the Sainte-Famille Cemetery in Falmouth with consideration of ongoing funding to support maintenance from West Hants Regional Municipality.

DISCUSSION

Staff met with members of the West Hants Historical Society who expressed an interest in the property however, noted ongoing financial support from the municipality would be required for maintenance and upkeep of the lands.

Members of the West Hants Historical Society connected with local landscape companies to provide insight into the costs associated with the annual and ongoing maintenance of the property.

Estimates received by the West Hants Historical Society ranged between \$4,479.25 and \$9,317.87. It should be noted that the estimates may increase annually.

Optional Motion Pending Council's Direction:

Council directs staff to enter into a four-year funding agreement with the West Hants Historical Society, for the cost of maintenance for the Sainte-Famille property, at an amount of \$XXXXXX to be adjusted annually by the December consumer price index.

NEXT STEPS

Pending approval from Council, staff will enter into a funding agreement with the West Hants Historical Society to support the ongoing maintenance costs of the Sainte-Famille Cemetery.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Should Council proceed with a funding agreement, it will be incorporated into the 2025-26 Operating budget, and no costs are anticipated to occur prior to March 31, 2025.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Council can choose to approve, amend or change the financial support offered to the West Hants Historical Society for the maintenance of the Sainte-Famille Cemetery.
2. Council can choose to not approve this request.
3. Council can choose to direct staff to take the necessary steps to obtain ownership of the Sainte-Famille Cemetery.

ATTACHMENTS

Sally Ross, Secretary, Les Amis de Grand-Pre - letter

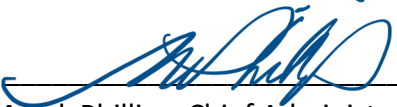
WHRM Recommendation Report – July 3, 2024 – Councillor John Smith

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER REVIEW

Staff await the position of Council regarding this matter.

Report Prepared by: _____
Kathy Kehoe, Director, Community Development

Report Reviewed by: _____
Carlee Rochon, Director, Financial Services

Report Approved by:  _____
Mark Phillips, Chief Administrative Officer

Mr. Mark Phillips
Chief Administrative Officer
West Hants Regional Municipality
76 Morison Dr., P.O. Box 3000
Windsor, NS B0N 2T0

April 12, 2024

Subject: Sainte-Famille Cemetery, 419 Gabriel Road, Falmouth (PID 45249406)

Dear Mr. Phillips:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Amis de Grand-Pré (Friends of Grand-Pré) to request that the West Hants Regional Municipality take ownership of Sainte-Famille Cemetery in order to ensure that it is protected and maintained in perpetuity. We would be handing over an Acadian burying ground that served from 1698 to 1755 and that is now a provincial and a municipal heritage property.

According to the archaeological surveys carried out in 1996, there are an estimated 300 graves. However, there are no gravestones since Acadians marked their graves with wooden crosses.

If the West Hants Regional Municipality accepts our request, we would make a commitment to promote the site and to share our contacts and expertise as required. For over 25 years the Committee for the Preservation of Sainte-Famille Cemetery and the Amis de Grand-Pré have beautified and maintained the property and publicised the importance of this pre-Deportation Acadian site in West Hants not only for the Acadian community, but for the public at large. We have conducted many small tours to Sainte-Famille Cemetery and to Fort Edward for tourists from Louisiana, France, Quebec and the Maritime Provinces.

On page 2, I outline the **heritage value** of Sainte-Famille Cemetery and list the **assets** of the property. On page 3, there is a photo of the granite sign marking the entrance to the cemetery.

I thank you in advance for the attention you give to our request.

Respectfully yours.



Sally Ross
Secretary
Les Amis de Grand-Pré

cc. Susan Surette-Draper (President, Amis de Grand-Pré)
Lucille Amirault, Ken Belfontain, Jacqueline Favracque,
Anne Landry Cameron (Committee members)

Heritage Value of Sainte-Famille Cemetery

- 1) As a pre-Deportation Acadian site, Sainte-Famille Cemetery is a symbol of municipal and provincial significance. The cemetery was used by Acadians from 1698 to 1755. The adjoining church was burned in 1756.
- 2) Other than dykes and a few place names, the Acadian heritage in the Regional Municipality of West Hants is invisible. The built heritage was burned or destroyed when the Acadians were deported in 1755. Sainte-Famille Cemetery is a rare surviving Acadian site.
- 3) Established in 1698, Sainte-Famille Cemetery is the earliest known cemetery of settlers of European origin in West Hants. It has been well documented by historians and archaeologists. In 2023, Dr. Jonathan Fowler of Saint Mary's University conducted surveys with ground penetrating radar and will continue this research in May 2024.
- 4) Sainte-Famille Cemetery is closely connected to the history of Fort Edward. Acadians from Sainte-Famille Parish were deported from Windsor.
- 5) Sainte-Famille Cemetery is intimately connected to the Acadian farmers who played a significant role in the lasting agricultural development of the marshlands on both sides of the Pisiquid (Avon) River.
- 6) Today, descendants of the Acadians who settled in Pisiquid (today's West Hants) live in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Quebec, Louisiana, and France. The Amis de Grand-Pré have conducted private and group tours in West Hants for Acadians from all these locations.

Description of the Assets of the Property (3/4 of an acre)

- 1) an interpretive panel on a wrought iron base providing the history of the cemetery (the original panel was replaced in 2019)
- 2) four large rectangular granite stones donated by Mr. Jim Bremner, believed to have been cut by Acadians in the 1700s for the foundations of their houses on the property now known as Castle Frederick.
- 3) one small flat grey granite monument installed in 2004 by the Landry and Trahan families, from Canada and Louisiana
- 4) one large black granite monument which bears the bilingual bronze plaque indicating a designated Provincial Heritage Property (2017) and the bronze plaque indicating a designated Municipal Heritage Property (2019)
- 5) one large vertical grey granite stone which serves as a road sign indicating Sainte-Famille Cemetery 1698-1755 (installed in 2022)
- 6) two stone posts for flag poles (for flying the Acadian flag and the Acadiana Parish flag of Louisiana)
- 7) a memorial walkway comprised of over 350 inscribed bricks purchased over the years by Acadians from France, Louisiana and Canada.
- 8) two benches
- 9) gravel driveway and path
- 10) well maintained lawn
- 11) several hard wood trees (maple and linden)
- 12) rugosa rose hedge that forms part of the eastern boundary of the property
- 13) three adjoining flower beds, a small burning bush, small forsythia and legacy lilac bushes

"The designation as a Municipal Heritage Property illustrates and promotes the respect the Municipality of West Hants has for the historical significance of the Sainte-Famille Cemetery." – Abraham Zebian, Warden, The Municipality of the District of West Hants, unveiling ceremony September 19, 2019.



"It is very meaningful to know that the resting place of our ancestral family members at the Sainte-Famille Cemetery is protected, and to know that their descendants will always be able to visit the site." – Gayle Breaux Smith (Lafayette, Louisiana) whose ancestors were deported in 1755 from Fort Edward.



WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY REPORT

Information ☐	Recommendation x ☒	Decision Request x ☐	Councillor Activity x ☐
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To: (Name of Committee)

Submitted by: John A Smith, Councilor Falmouth District 9

Date: July 3, 2024

Subject: Sainte-Famille Cemetery Transfer of Ownership

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Municipal Government Act

Section 50 (1) A municipality may acquire and own property granted or conveyed to the municipality either absolutely or in trust for a public or charitable purpose.

Section (2) Where property is conveyed to a municipality in trust for a public or charitable purpose, the municipality holds the property according to the terms of the trust and may do anything necessary to carry out the objects of the trust.

RECOMMENDATION or DECISION REQUEST

CoTW recommends that

West Hants Regional Municipality take ownership of Sainte-Famille Cemetery to ensure that it is protected and maintained in perpetuity.

BACKGROUND

Property x ☒	Public Opinion ☐	Environment ☐	Social x ☐	Economic x ☐	Councillor Activity ☐
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[2024-04-12 Sally Ross Re Request to take over ownership of the Sainte Famille Cemetery.pdf](#)
Letter of Request

Heritage Value of Sainte-Famille Cemetery

Description of the Assets of the Property

(Provide the Who, What, When, Where and Why. If a Councillor Activity Report check "Councillor Activity" and provide your update/info below in the "Discussion" section.)

DISCUSSION

The municipality would incur the operating costs of cemetery upkeep. These costs are for grass mowing. There are no foreseen capital costs. The cemetery is not an operating cemetery so there are no administration costs for burials, and it is not open during the winter so there is no snow clearing costs.

Saint-Famille Cemetery is a historic site with many local, regional and international tourists visiting the site. It has a historic connection to Fort Edward and is part of the history of Acadian settlement and the Expulsion of Acadians.

NEXT STEPS

CAO to start proceeding to acquire Saint-Famille Cemetery.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Should the Municipality take over the Saint-Famille Cemetery, there would be costs associated with the annual operating expenses. In the current year, these costs would be unbudgeted for.

Additionally, Cemeteries are currently area rated in WHRM, meaning this would need to be area rated to the West Hants Tax Area Rate.

It is also important to note, that the two current municipal owned cemeteries have reserves that are used to help support the costs associated with the operations. It would be required to determine a funding source for this cemetery as well, if we did not want it to become a burden on the West Hants Community tax payers.

ALTERNATIVES

Council may choose not to take ownership of the cemetery.

ATTACHMENTS

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER REVIEW

The topic of the WHRM accepting ownership or carrying out maintenance responsibilities for additional cemeteries has been discussed in the past and is coming forward again through this report.

There are as many as approximately eighty-six (86) cemeteries in the regional municipality, including the four managed by the WHRM. Of the eighty-six (86) referenced it is unknown how many are inactive.

Staff await direction from Council on this specific request, but I will note that additional resources will be requested should this request be approved. It is further noted that other cemetery groups have expressed the need for support. What is the best manner for the municipality to support these groups?

In addition to the possibility of the WHRM taking over the noted cemetery it is also encouraged that the cemetery representatives apply for a community grant under the current grant policy to support the financial challenges associated with the care of the properties. Perhaps Council could reevaluate the grant policy as well to provide a specific financial allocation within the policy for cemetery operations and care.

Staff await the direction from Council on this matter.

Report Prepared by: _____
John A Smith, Councillor District 9

Report Reviewed by:  _____
Mark Phillips, Chief Administrative Officer