

Summary of Consultation with Monument Builders of Hamilton

Memorial dealers represented: Woodland Memorials, Mountain Memorials, Sharp Monuments, Rice Monuments, H.G. Hardwick and Son, Hamilton Memorials

City of Hamilton staff: Kara Bunn, John Perrotta, Joanne Warren

The memorial retailers expressed their concerns on the proposal for the City of Hamilton Municipal Cemeteries offering the sale of granite monuments and markers. They have been in business for many years serving the residents of Hamilton and are concerned they will lose staff or their business if the City of Hamilton go into direct competition with the memorial dealers.

Some of their concerns and City response include:

1. MBH Concern: Pressure on sales from the City of Hamilton's commission-based staff would make it an uneven playing field.

City Response: It was confirmed that City of Hamilton cemetery staff are not commission based.

2. MBH Concern: Concerns on the care and maintenance of old monuments in our cemeteries was expressed and memorial dealers stated they have an interest in taking on the repair work and being able to report issues that they see while in City Cemeteries.

City Response: City of Hamilton staff clarified that a monument inspection and repair program does exist and repairs to high priority monuments based on safety or risk are repaired annually. The City of Hamilton Parks and Cemeteries section is open to local memorial dealers assisting with repair work and if they see issues with monuments that staff invite the dealers to make the City aware of them.

3. MBH Concern: The memorial dealers discussed providing revenue generating alternatives for the City to consider opposed to offering the sale of monuments and markers.

City Response: The City agreed to consider the suggested alternatives and meet again. To date, no alternative options have been brought forward by the MBH.

4. MBH Concern: The memorial dealers suggested contracting out cemetery operational work requirements as a way of reducing annual operating costs and the tax levy.

City Response: City of Hamilton staff explained that the collective bargaining agreement prohibits reducing staff to contract same work and explained that internal cemetery staff have been found to do a better job than contractors who do not have a vested interest in the business.

5. MBH Concern: Memorial dealers stated that the City of Hamilton benefit from generating revenue from the sale of concrete foundations for the installation of monuments, and ground level marker setting fees.

City Response: City of Hamilton staff explained that provincial legislation prohibits a cemetery operator from generating any profits from the sale of concrete foundations and marker setting fees. These services are charged at 100% cost recovery to interment rights holders, with no profit margin.

6. MBH Concern: The memorial dealers stated that the memorial application approval process completed through the cemetery administration office is not efficient, and memorial installation permits are not received in a reasonable amount of time.

City Response: City of Hamilton staff acknowledged the concern and advised that improvements to the process will be made to better assist the memorial dealers and City staff.