

BUDGET COMMITTEE - DECEMBER 1, 2009

ANIMAL CONTROL BY-LAW FEE AMENDMENTS

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Legal and Administrative Services and City Solicitor and the Director of Enforcement Services, in consultation with the Manager of Special Projects, Licensing & Permits and Risk Management, recommend:

1. That the amendment to the Fees, for Dog and Cat Licenses, and Impounding and Boarding of animals be approved subject to the required public notice and meeting requirements; and
2. That Schedule 'A' of Animal Control By-law 53-2002 be amended to modify the licensing and impound related fees as outlined in the report.

Contribution to Sustainability

Online renewals will reduce the need to attend in person, reducing automobile use and adjusting fees will improve contribute to financial sustainability.

Economic Impact

There is a potential to generate additional licensing revenue which would offset costs of the online license renewal program of \$45,000.00. This amount is included in the 2010 Capital Budget.

Communications Plan

The fee changes will be communicated to the agencies selling licenses on behalf of the City. The fee change will also be listed on the City's website. The Licensing Department will be preparing a renewal notice including the new fees which will be mailed out to current dog and cat licenses.

Purpose

To amend the Animal Control By-law by establishing uniform fees and implement online license renewal.

Background - Analysis and Options

The City of Vaughan Animal Control By-law 53-2002, requires owners of dogs and cats to license the animals annually. Currently, licenses are available from the Clerk's Department, from participating veterinary offices, and from the City's animal control contractor.

Although exact numbers of dogs and cats in the City is not known, a recent study by the Pathwise Group and a survey conducted by Ispos-Reid would suggest that the numbers could be as high as 30,000 - 40,000.

Historically, the number of licenses sold each year has represented only a very small fraction of the number of dogs and cats, perhaps as low as 3%.

In addition, the current By-law provides the fee to be waived, or reduced, for those animals spayed or neutered, animals that are micro chipped, and licenses sold by the animal control provider and community partners.

Table #1 below demonstrates the number of licenses issued and the proportion of licenses for which fees were not received.

Table #1

Year	Dog Tags Issued	Dogs Tags No Fee Received	Cats Tags Issued	Cat Tags No Fee Received
2007	1472	1014	70	50
2008	1710	980	109	62
2009 (YTD)	984	798	70	51

The current fee schedule is in need of updating for a number of reasons:

1. the current business model is not efficient and is not at a cost recovery level;
2. other municipalities have stopped offering discounts for micro chipping and spay or neutering.

Table #2 demonstrates a benchmark for other municipalities' licensing fees. Vaughan's fees are below the average fees of the comparators. King, Brampton and Aurora have eliminated the discounts for spayed/neutered animals.

Table #2

City	Intact	Sterilized
Aurora	\$30	\$30
Brampton	\$20	\$20
Kingston	\$40	\$15
London	\$50	\$31
Mississauga	\$40	\$20
Town of Markham	\$41.50	\$26
Town of Richmond Hill	\$25	\$10
Township of King	\$22.50	\$22.50
Cambridge	\$25	\$15
City of Burlington	\$50	\$25
Waterloo	\$37	\$22
Vaughan	\$20	\$10
<i>Average Fee</i>	<i>\$34</i>	<i>\$22</i>

Staff are recommending a two phased approach to modifying the animal licensing methodology in Vaughan.

1. Amend the Animal Control By-law 53-2002 to discontinue the discounts for spay, neutered and micro chipped animals. The following license fees are proposed:
 - Dogs and Cats \$20
 - Aggressive/Vicious Breeds of Dogs \$50
 - Seniors - \$10 per animal

2. Implement an online license renewal program. Staff have identified a program from an external vendor, the same vendor that manages the City of Vaughan's online ticket payment process. This program request is included in the 2010 Capital Budget. The cost of the implementation of the online pet license program is \$45,000. The implementation timeline will be dependant on how the ITM department prioritizes the project.

The elimination of reduced cost licenses and the convenience of online renewals should provide increased fee revenues.

(If all licenses issued in 2008 had been sold at \$20, the revenue would have been \$36,380, as opposed to \$6,695).

Strategies still need to be identified to increase compliance with the pet licensing requirements. The City attempted to have door to door canvassers solicit the sales of licenses on a commission basis. This program was not successful.

Other municipalities across Canada use very aggressive enforcement strategies that have proven very successful. These strategies are costly to implement and maintain, and may not meet public expectations of pet licensing enforcement.

As the city of Vaughan moves towards having its own animal shelter late in 2010, the potential exists for developing adoption and licensing projects geared to increasing compliance with the licensing requirements. Talks are already underway with external suppliers to provide those purchasing animal licenses with valuable coupons or gifts. Additional reports will be provided as these initiatives take shape.

Impounds and Boarding Fees

Schedule 'A' also requires updating of the impounding fees. Currently, there is an escalating fee for repeat impounds, but the daily boarding fee remains unchanged and is unrealistically low (\$8 per day) compared to commercial boarding rates, generally \$20 - \$30 per day. The current cost of boarding a dog or cat does not result in a cost recovery model when compared against the costs of food and staffing to care for the animal.

As outlined in Table #3, staff are recommending changes to both the impound and boarding fees, to be phased-in over the next year.

Table #3

Impound Occurrence	Impound Fee (Current)	Boarding Fee per day (Current)	Impound Fee (Proposed)	Impound Fee (Proposed)	Boarding Fee per day (Proposed)	Boarding Fee per day (Proposed)
			Effective January 1, 2010	Effective November 1, 2010	Effective January 1, 2010	Effective November 1, 2010
First	\$15	\$8	\$18	\$20	\$12	\$20
Second	\$30	\$8	\$35	\$40	\$12	\$20
Third & Subsequent	\$50	\$8	\$55	\$60	\$12	\$20

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

This report is in keeping with the Vaughan Vision Service Excellence strategic initiatives. The necessary resources have been identified and allocated

Regional Implications

Not applicable.

Conclusion

Fees associated to animal control have not been adjusted for several years. The Animal Control By-law 53-2002 should be amended to bring the animal licensing and impound fees in line with other municipalities.

Attachments

None

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