

REPORT NO. 6 of the
PUBLIC SAFETY STANDING COMMITTEE
of its meeting held June 15,2011

Present:

Councillor Jones, Chair
Councillor Dilkens
Councillor Gignac
Councillor Maghnieh
Councillor Payne

That the following recommendation of the Public Safety Standing Committee
BE APPROVED as follows:

Moved by Councillor Payne, seconded by Councillor Gignac,

That Administration **REPORT BACK** with budget estimates for a spay and neuter voucher program for low income cat owners which would bring about a potentially significant reduction in the cat population in the City.

Carried.

Councillor Dilkens voting nay.

Clerk's Note: The report from the Manager of Policy, Licensing & Gaming/Deputy Licence Commissioner dated June 2, 2011 entitled "Response to CR57/2011 - Responsible Pet Ownership/Licensing of Cats" is **attached** as background information.

NOTIFICATION :				
Name	Address	Email Address	Tele hone	FAX
Melanie Coulter, Executive Director, Windsor Essex County Humane Society	1375 Provincial Road, Windsor, ON N8W5V8	melanie@windsorhumane.org	519-966-5751	519-966-2546
Jazzpurr Society for Animal Protection	647 Ouellette Avenue, Windsor, ON N9A4J4	jazmurr society@gmail.com info@jazmurr.org	519-258-9299	
Lori Coulter, Program Manager <u>S a Our Stra s</u> <u>Ms. Mary Chaborek</u>		lcoulter@idexcorp.com	519-259-4261	
			519-948-2101	

**THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF WINDSOR
Public Safety Standing Committee - Policy, Licensing and Gaming**

Report No. 11

MISSION STATEMENT:

"The City of Windsor, with the involvement of its citizens, will deliver effective and responsive municipal services, and will mobilize innovative community partnerships"

LiveLink REPORT#: 15236	Report Date: June 2, 2011
Author's Name: Sandra Bradt	Date to Standing Committee: June 15, 2011
Author's Phone: 519 266-6222 ext. 6532	Classification #:
Author's E-mail: sbradt@city.windsor.on.ca	

To: Public Safety Standing Committee

Subject: Response to CRS/2011 - Responsible Pet Ownership/Licensing of Cats

1. RECOMMENDATION: City Wide: Ward(s): ___

THAT City Council RECEIVE this report FOR INFORMATION AND;

THAT any further consideration of CR57/2011 and Basis Report #15236 with respect to Responsible Pet Ownership/Licensing of Cats initiatives BE REFERRED to the 2012 budget process.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

N/A

3. BACKGROUND:

On May 20, 2008, City Council adopted M198-2008 which called for public consultations on a proposed responsible pet ownership by-law. Meetings were held in each of the five wards to determine whether such a by-law would have wide community support and if the issue was worth pursuing.

Subsequently, at their meeting of February 7, 2011, City Council received the report of the Licence Commissioner regarding the outcome of those meetings, responsible pet ownership and the licensing of cats. Council adopted CR57/2011 which stated that the report:

"BE ADOPTED IN PRINCIPLE, subject to a further report on administrative and budgetary issues regarding:

- I. Voluntary Licensing of Cats;
2. Grant Funds to Humane Society;
3. Implement Voucher Program;
4. Implementation of the licensing of breeders."

4. DISCUSSION:

The high number of homeless cats and cat euthanasia in Windsor has been a concern in the community for 15 years, as evidenced by the fact that the matter has come before City Council repeatedly during this time frame.

As directed, Administration presents discussion on the administrative and budgetary issues of the four initiatives listed above for Council's consideration.

Voluntary Licensing of Cats

One of the pillars of responsible pet ownership is the identification of companion animals. Without identification, animals face an uncertain future on the street, or euthanasia at a shelter already full of lost/surrendered/abandoned animals.

Generally speaking, attendees at public consultations in 2008 supported a cat licensing program provided that any funds raised were put back into animal welfare programs. The budget for animal control resides within the Policy, Gaming and Licensing division of the City Clerk's Office. While fees collected for licenses do not cover expenses for animal control and welfare, they are considered to offset some of the costs, thereby satisfying the request of the public that any funds raised through cat licensing support animal welfare programs and/or the Humane Society.

The experience of other jurisdictions who have implemented cat licensing is that the number of licenses issued has not been overwhelming. The staff efforts to issue cat licenses would be the same as those for dogs. Nominal costs to implement a cat licensing program include small adjustments to the AMANDA (Application Management and Data Automation) system that tracks licenses, staff time to input cat licenses, and procurement of additional tags and licenses to be issued to cats. Those costs would be absorbed within the existing departmental budget.

Compliance and Enforcement staff receive few complaints regarding cats. Out of 96 keeping of animal complaints in 2010, only 48 (50%) of the calls were for cats. In 2011, 17 of the 52, or 32%, of the keeping of animal complaints received have been for cats. A voluntary licensing program is not expected to impact the level of complaints received.

Should Council choose to adopt cat licensing, it is suggested that the program mirror that of dogs, with the exceptions that cat licenses are optional and could be purchased at any time throughout the year. Fees would be consistent with those of dogs - \$32 per unaltered cat and \$15 per altered cat annually. Communication of the new program could be done through the existing dog licensing channels in 2011 and costs absorbed within existing departmental resources.

Support of the Humane Society's Spay/Neuter Clinic

The Windsor Essex County Humane Society was founded in 1926 and continues to promote responsible pet ownership. The Society is committed to being involved in the community and making a difference.

In keeping with that commitment, the Society intends on opening a high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter clinic in 2011. It will copy the model developed by the U.S. based Humane Alliance. The Alliance has shown a 79% reduction in euthanasia rates at the shelter near their low-cost clinic since its opening in 1994.

The Humane Society destroyed 180 dogs and 3959 cats in 2010. Although difficult to quantify, the Humane Society estimates that the cost to alter an animal at the new clinic will be slightly lower than the cost to shelter that same animal for the required three days, then euthanize.

While dated, information published in the United States asserts that for every \$1 invested in spay/neuter programs, there is a corresponding savings of \$6-\$18 in animal control costs over 10 years.

There are many street cat colonies in the City. If the cost to alter animals is low, not only does it encourage guardians to spay and neuter their companion animals, it also encourages those giving care to feral and stray cats to alter them as well.

Although not provided for within the 2011 budget, a contribution towards the Humane Society's spay/neuter program supports an established animal welfare agency and encourages a private public partnership to address the community problem of homeless animals and high euthanizations. To clearly define such a contribution as being a singular capital allocation would dissuade the Society from returning to Council with an annual request for operating funds. Any contribution toward the Society's program would be at Council's discretion.

Notwithstanding the above, City Council should be aware that they have waived the Humane Society's building permit fees, parkland dedication fees and development charges associated with the expansions that opened in 2010 and also for the new spay/neuter clinic currently under construction. The total value of fees waived in 2010 and 2011 is \$26,024.00. Additionally, the Public Safety Standing Committee has recommended a \$48,900 increase in the bid amount of the Animal Control contract.

Administration did not find examples where other Humane Societies or OSPCA branches were provided municipal grants. Where municipal funding was provided, it was designated for voucher programs or the contract for animal control services.

Spay/Neuter Vouchers

Published reports point to pet sterilizations as the very foundation of effective animal control. Other communities have reported success in reducing the number of homeless cats when initiatives are put in place that restrict the number of unwanted births.

) One such program is vouchers for spay and neuter surgeries. Although a large percentage of owned cats are altered, for many the cost to do so is prohibitive. Making surgery affordable encourages responsible pet guardianship.

Upon undertaking a review of vouchers, Administration found there are a variety of methods to deliver the service. Typically an entity, be that a municipality, local humane society, chapter of the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals or private charity, would provide funding for a program and vouchers would be issued according to a set of criteria. Vouchers may be provided specifically for low-income guardians or to anyone upon request, through a lottery system for a limited amount, a combination of any of the above or in one instance, a rebate upon proof of alteration.

Reports regarding low-cost clinics state the users tend to not have an ongoing relationship with a private veterinarian. Therefore, a voucher program targeted to low-income guardians is not cannibalizing the existing client base of private vets; it is bringing in new clients who would not otherwise be providing surgery for their animals. In the absence of federally established poverty lines, a method used by other Canadian municipalities to determine eligibility is the Low Income Cut Off (LICO) established by Statistics Canada. The benefit to using the LICO is that it is a well-defined and generally accepted methodology which identifies those who are substantially worse off than the average.

Vouchers could be honoured at private clinics in the city, in addition to the Humane Society's new clinic. Private veterinarians and the Society would be given equal consideration under the program and all would be able to share in any potential revenue. Voucher recipients have a choice of service provider and can schedule appointments to suit their location and schedule.

In some American cities and in Barrie, Ontario, the need for vouchers diminished once a low cost spay/neuter clinic opened. From 2003-2009, the Barrie OSPCA had received \$5000 annually from the municipality to administer vouchers to offset the cost of surgery. Guardians were still required to pay a portion of the costs. After the low cost spay/neuter clinic opened, the OSPCA found that clients preferred to wait for service at the clinic, rather than use a voucher that only covered a portion of the costs. The program ceased operation in 2009.

In Keswick, \$20,000 - \$25,000 a year is provided by the municipality to a local charity. Upon receipt of proof of the animal's alteration, the charity rebates a portion of the surgery costs to the applicant. With the funds available, approximately 400-500 cat owners received rebates ranging from \$25-\$75 per cat.

In Calgary, Sudbury and Saskatoon, the municipality funds and administers the program in house. In Sudbury vouchers are provided to anyone who requests one, on a first-come, first served basis. Vouchers are issued to provide a \$115 discount for spaying and \$65 discount when neutering. When the funding, typically \$50,000- \$60,000, is expended, the program is closed for the year.

In Saskatoon, vouchers are administered to low-income guardians only. Citizens must fill out an application and submit a \$25 co-payment. Vouchers are given out to successful applicants until the funding for the year is expended. The City reimburses veterinarians the cost of the surgery. \$31,300 was budgetted in 2009 and \$40,000 in 2010 to provide approximately 250 surgeries each year.

In Calgary surgeries are provided free of charge for low income guardians. To qualify, one must prove income (LICO) and submit an application for consideration. The animal control program in Calgary is widely regarded as the gold standard. The entire cost of the Animal Services division is \$5.5 million. They recover \$5.4 million.

Provision of spay/neuter vouchers was included as a non-statutory service in the recently issued RFP for animal control services. The Humane Society has indicated that they are willing to administer a voucher program on the City's behalf for an administration fee of \$2.50 per voucher. The Society suggests that funding for vouchers be sufficient for the program to have an effect.

Should it be the will of Council to implement a voucher program, Administration would work with the Humane Society to develop a program incorporating such best practices as reserving vouchers for those who demonstrate financial need and allowing all veterinary service providers to participate. Sufficient resources would also need to be allocated to communicate this new program to the public.

Breeders Licensing

The issue of licensing breeders has been raised periodically by the public and Humane Society as another possible tool to control the birth of unwanted litters and deter irresponsible backyard breeders. Within the context of a continuum of enforcement licensing breeders provides the wherewithal to stop irresponsible owners from continuously breeding in substandard conditions to make a profit. Theoretically this type of licensing will eliminate puppy mills.

To be successful, the program requires strict criteria and diligent monitoring. There are several steps that Compliance and Enforcement would need to undertake to prove the operation of the business, such as collection of documentation and sales receipts.

As the current practice for investigations is complaint driven, staff would find non-compliant pet breeders only after a complaint was lodged. Compliance and Enforcement Officers would be responsible to prove deliberate defiance or evidence of the by-law contravention. If a complaint investigation were to uncover issues with animal welfare or excessive numbers, the existing animal by-laws already offer the authority to take action.

The majority of animal complaint calls received by the Humane Society and Compliance and Enforcement staff are about dogs, not cats. There is more money to be made breeding dogs than cats. However, the issue is the number of cats on the streets, not dogs.

A breeders' license does not address the problem of cats on the streets. Additionally, Administration is seeking to address problems proactively through education and voluntary initiatives, not enforcement. A comprehensive regime for licensing breeders, coupled with an aggressive, pro-active approach to enforcement would require a significant investment in resources that would far exceed any funds raised through the license itself. Consideration for the resources required to communicate a new licensing program should also be given.

To proactively investigate breeders without a license would compete with existing departmental priorities, such as dirty yards, signage, noise, licensing, etc. With only 48 of 96 Keeping of Animal complaints in 2010 being for cats and 17 out of 52 keeping of animal complaints thus far in 2011, the outcome does not justify the expense.

Amendment to limits on animal ownership

The issue of increasing the number of animals allowed per household was raised at the January 19, 2011 Windsor Licensing Commission meeting. Increasing those limits has been previously

discussed by Council and the public in the context of responsible pet ownership. Although not a component of CR57/2011, the issues are related and so limits are addressed in this report.

By-law 8156 - A By-law for Prohibiting, Regulating, and Restricting the Keeping of Animals within the City of Windsor or Defined Areas Thereof- was passed in March of 1985. It was amended by By-law 75-2002 in March of 2002 to increase the number of cats allowed per household to four. The limit on dog ownership remained at two.

Should Council so desire, By-law 8156 could be amended to allow for an increase in animals, to 3 dogs or 6 cats per household. The total number of both dogs and cats would not exceed 6 where both dogs and cats are kept, with a maximum number of 3 dogs permitted. These numbers are consistent with the animal limits found in other municipalities. As a pillar of responsible pet ownership is identification, and a solution to the overpopulation of pets is alteration, a guardian may increase the number of animals per household only if all are altered and licensed. If not, the existing limits of 2 dogs and 4 cats would remain in effect.

The cost to implement an increase in the limits of pet ownership would be the staff time involved in amending the by-law and adjusting the online references to the numbers allowed. Communication of the change could be addressed within existing departmental resources.

A survey of other Ontario municipalities determined that, where indicated, the maximum number of cats allowed per household was 6. Licensing and Building (Compliance and Enforcement Unit) do not foresee any issues in amending limits to 6 for responsible owners. The Humane Society also supports raising the number of animals allowed per household for responsible owners.

Increasing household limits for licensed and altered animals would allow responsible owners to provide forever homes for more animals, with little or no budgetary impact on the Corporation. The nominal increase in licensing fees could support animal welfare measures in the community.

However, it is interesting to note that in 2004 City Council received a petition requesting an increase in the amount of dogs permitted per household. At its meeting of February 2, 2004, City Council adopted CR75/2004 (BASIS #9952) which stated:

"THAT NO ACTION BE TAKEN on the petition submitted by Sherry Charette requesting that the by-law be amended to permit more than two dogs per household."

5. FINANCIAL MATTERS:

The 2011 budget approved by City Council does not contain funding sources for any of the initiatives discussed above.

Additionally, as it is Council's desire to maintain a zero tax levy increase, implementation of any new services or programs that would materially affect the budget may need to be funded through reductions to other programs or services, or may result in a one-time charge to funding sources such as the Budget Stabilization Reserve.

As mentioned, the Public Safety Standing Committee at its May 18 meeting recommended the approval of a new contract with the Humane Society for Animal Control Services for the next three years. The contract increases the annual base amount by 6.2% or \$48,900 and is effective July 1, 2011.

Considering all of the above, should Council wish to take any action, only two initiatives would not materially affect the budget. The costs to implement a voluntary licensing program and/or amend Bylaw 8156 to change the limits on pet ownership could be absorbed within existing departmental budgets. It is anticipated that any communications required to convey changes to these two initiatives could also be absorbed within existing channels and budgets, i.e. with changes to website.

Although staff did not find many examples of other jurisdictions who had adopted voluntary cat licensing, those that did implement such a program generated very little revenue. However, the possibility exists that fees from a voluntary cat licensing program could be used to offset some of the costs of animal control and welfare, in accordance with the comments received at the 2008 public consultations.

Should such a program be implemented, fees could be set to be consistent with those of dogs - \$32 per unaltered cat and \$15 per altered cat annually - and would remain within the Policy, Licensing and Gaming department. In 2010 the dog licensing program raised \$192,065, which does not cover the costs to deliver the animal control program. Administration does not anticipate a substantial increase in licensing fees with the addition of cats.

Actions that would materially affect the budget include any grants to the Humane Society, the implementation of a voucher program and adoption of a breeders' licensing regime.

As discussed, a contribution towards the Humane Society's spay/neuter program supports an established agency and encourages a partnership to address a community problem. A capital allocation would dissuade the Society from returning to Council with an annual request for operating funds. Any amount allocated to the Society's program would be at Council's discretion.

In researching programs that provided vouchers for spay/neuter surgeries, Administration found a range of service delivery methods and a range of costs. Examples were found where vouchers offering discounts on surgery ranged from \$25 to \$150 per voucher. The local Humane Society expressed concern that if any vouchers were to be provided, the face value should be sufficient to provide incentive for their use. They suggested \$60-\$70 would be a reasonable amount. In the latest Animal Control contract, the City did negotiate with the Humane Society to administer a voucher program for an administrative fee of \$2.50 per voucher.

Using the amounts mentioned above, cost estimates to deliver a voucher program could range from a few thousand dollars to tens of thousands of dollars, depending on the number of vouchers issued and the value of each voucher.

The implementation of a breeders' licensing program and allocation of the staff resources for pro-active enforcement would negatively affect the departmental budget and staff resources.

To ensure the success of any new initiatives, a comprehensive communication plan would need to be developed to inform the community of their introduction. The cost of such a plan would also materially affect the budget, as no funds have been allocated for it in 2011.

Based on past programs delivered by the Communications unit, a preliminary cost estimate to develop a communications plan ranges from a few hundred dollars to several thousand. Should any of the initiatives addressed in this report be adopted, consideration should be given to providing additional resources to communicate them.

6. CONSULTATIONS:

Internal consultations were undertaken with Licensing, Building (Compliance and Enforcement Unit), Communications and Customer Service, and Finance, in addition to the Windsor-Essex Humane Society. Historical comments received by the Corporation in response to this issue over the years were also reviewed. The municipalities and organizations that were personally and electronically contacted in the course of research for this report are listed below.

7. CONCLUSION:

As directed by M198-2008 and CR57/2011, Administration has researched and presented discussion on options to address the issue of homeless cats, high cat euthanizations and responsible pet ownership in the City of Windsor. Despite the honourable intention to address these issues, the fact remains that none of these initiatives have been accounted for in the 2011 budget.


The Public Safety Standing Committee is recommending to Council acceptance of a new three year contract with the Windsor-Essex County Humane Society which contains a base contract increase of \$48,900 for animal control services.

The annual budget process allows for the opportunity to introduce and fund new programs and services. City Council has also committed to a zero tax levy increase. Status quo does not affect the 2011 budget while allowing the City to continue to meet its current animal control service levels and statutory obligations regarding animal control.

Considering all of the above, Administration recommends that any further actions pertaining to CR57/2011 be referred to the 2012 budget process.

**Manager of Policy, Licensing & Gaming/
Deputy License Commissioner**

**r. Colucci
Treasurer/Chief Financial Officer**


**Lee Anne Doyle
Chief Building Official**

S draBradt
Corporate Policy Coordinator (A)

SB

APPENDICES:

NOTIFICATION :				
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