



CITY OF HAMILTON
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Licensing and By-law Services Division

TO:	Chair and Members Planning Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	February 20, 2018
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Animal Adoptions for the City of Hamilton (PED18004) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Sue Russell (905) 546-2424 Ext. 7999
SUBMITTED BY:	Ken Leendertse Director, Licensing and By-law Services Planning and Economic Development Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That staff be directed to commence an Animal Adoption Pilot Program and report back to the Planning Committee at the end of an 18 month term regarding the impact on current operations and the City’s animal rescue partners;
- (b) That the General Manager of Planning and Economic Development be authorized to execute all necessary documents to implement Recommendation (a) in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor;
- (c) That the item respecting The Feasibility of Establishing a City Animal Adoption Service, in Partnership with the HBSPCA, be identified as complete and removed from the Planning Committee Outstanding Business List.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council directed staff to assess the feasibility of establishing a City Animal Adoption Service, in partnership with the Hamilton - Burlington Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (HBSPCA). Animal Services works collaboratively with over 30 animal rescue partners to find homes for the City’s adoptable animals in absence of a municipal adoption service. The HBSPCA is the main stakeholder and take approximately one third of the City’s animals. Other rescue partners also take approximately one third of the City’s animals. The HBSPCA and other rescue partners do not have the capacity to take all of the City’s animals and therefore healthy adoptable animals remain waiting in the shelter.

Animal adoption is the main avenue for finding homes for shelter animals and is the best practice utilized by area municipalities. A municipal adoption program is a natural extension of the services that Animal Services provides to the community. Animal Services is requesting to expand the City's role and commitment to saving the lives of adoptable animals by piloting a municipal adoption program. The pilot will be conducted and assessed over an 18 month period. Adoptions will be facilitated at the shelter, satellite locations and through electronic adoption methods.

Providing a municipally-operated animal adoption service, with the continued collaboration of all stakeholders, will increase the City's lifesaving potential for the animals brought into the City's care and create a full service shelter for the community.

Therefore, it is recommended that an Animal Adoption Pilot Program be established by Animal Services and that staff report back after an 18 month term with the impact the program has had on the shelter operations, rescue partners and the community.

Alternatives for Consideration – See Appendix “E”

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: The Adoption Service is a revenue neutral program. It is estimated that some of the cost for sheltering and medical treatment may be recovered through the adoption fees charged for each animal.

Staffing: An 18 month pilot project will determine if the Adoption Service can be accommodated within the existing staff complement and with the enhancement of a volunteer program.

Legal: The City has the authority to adopt out the animals that it impounds. Under the Section 103(1)(b) of the *Municipal Act*, 2001, S.O. 2001, c. 25 power has been granted to the City to sell impounded animals (i) if they have not been claimed within a reasonable time, (ii) if the expenses of the municipality respecting the impounding of the animals are not paid, or (iii) at such time and in such manner as provided in the [municipalities] by-law. The City has established For Responsible Animal Ownership, By-Law No. 12-031 which allows, under section 11, for the City, after the expiration of the redemption period, to sell the dogs, cats, and other animals that the City has impounded.

Animal adoption fees for the Animal Adoption Pilot Program will have to be established. The City of Hamilton's Public Notice Policy By-Law, By-Law No. 07-351, requires that public notice be given of a minimum of one Committee meeting to consider the enactment of a fee, charge or rate by-law. A separate report regarding the proposed animal adoption fees will

have to be brought to Council for consideration. The animal adoption fees will have to be added to the City's User Fees and Charges for Services, Activities or the Use of Property by-law.

Historically, the HBSPCA has operated under the notion that they have first right to any of the City's adoptable animals. The City disagrees with HBSPCA and does not have a record of any formal executed agreement between the City and the HBSPCA regarding this right.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 2002 the HBSPCA did not renew their contract with City of Hamilton to provide animal control but agreed to continue adopting the City's animals. Hamilton Animal Control was established in a building shared with the HBSPCA in January 2003.

In 2004 Hamilton Animal Control began to form additional partnerships with rescue organizations to take excess adoptable animals in an effort to avoid euthanizing healthy adoptable animals.

In 2012 Hamilton Animal Control utilized best practices in managing shelter intake by discontinuing the practice of picking up healthy stray cats for euthanasia.

On February 11, 2015, Council directed staff to assess the feasibility of establishing a City Animal Adoption Service, in partnership with the HBSPCA, and report back to the Planning Committee accordingly.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

N/A

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

- Legal Services
- HBSPCA and Rescue Partners
- Citizens of Hamilton were engaged through public survey
- PetSmart Charities and PetSmart Canada
- Cities of Burlington, Toronto, Markham, Mississauga, Guelph, Brampton, Ottawa and London

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Hamilton Animal Services (HAS) operates an open admission tax based animal shelter. HAS accepts all companion animals regardless of species, medical, temperament or

behavioural condition. Animals that come into the shelter are lost, have strayed from their home, or have been surrendered by an owner that can no longer provide it with care.

Staff works to reunite lost pets with their owners and to find placement for animals that come into the City's shelter. HAS does not provide a public adoption service for domestic animals and therefore must rely on the animal rescue partners to rehome the City's adoptable animals as the alternative would be euthanasia. Animals that come into the municipal shelter that are not claimed by their owners are given to the HBSPCA or other rescue partners at no cost.

In 2016 HAS sheltered 3,248 dogs and cats. The HBSPCA took approximately 37% of the dogs and cats for their adoption program. An additional 33% of the City's dogs and cats were given to rescue partners for their adoption programs.

The HBSPCA has operated under the premise that they have first selection of the City's animals for their adoption program. This arrangement began in 2003 when the HBSPCA did not renew their contract to provide animal control services for Hamilton, Ancaster and Dundas but continued to rescue the City's animals for their adoption program. The animals from Stoney Creek, Flamborough and Glanbrook were not included in this arrangement as Stoney Creek operated a municipal adoption service at the Jones Road Shelter. Flamborough and Glanbrook animal adoption services were under private contracts.

The intention of the original arrangement was for HAS to receive revenue from the intake of animals through owner surrender fees and dog licensing fees and for HBSPCA to receive revenue from the adoption fees.

Current State Analysis

Although an agreement between the City of Hamilton and HBSPCA was never executed, historically the HBSPCA has operated under the premise of "first right of refusal" when selecting animals at HAS for adoption.

The HBSPCA does not have the capacity to rescue all of the adoptable animals that come into the municipal shelter. As a result, City staff spends a considerable amount of time contacting and developing relationships with other rescue organizations in an effort to provide positive outcomes for the surplus of animals in the HAS shelter. The City has over 30 rescue partners that help with the overflow of animals that are not rescued by the HBSPCA's adoption program.

One of the most challenging issues for rescue organizations is the capacity to humanely care for the volume of animals needing to be adopted. Even with the HBSPCA and rescue partners taking the City's animals, approximately one third of animals remain in the shelter. Shelter Statistics are attached to this Report as Appendix "A". There is a

need for a municipal adoption service in the community to help find homes for the remaining animals left in the shelter.

HAS is mandated by Provincial law to hold stray domestic animals for a minimum period of three days for an owner to claim the animal. All animals that come into the shelter are given flea treatment and vaccinated upon intake to prevent the spread of illness in the shelter. These medical costs are approximately \$19.38 per cat. The basic cost for feeding and sheltering a cat is approximately \$10 per day. Holding a cat for the minimum three-day stray period plus basic medical treatment cost the City approximately \$49.38 per cat. Less than 8% of the cats are claimed by their owner.

During the stray period, the HBSPCA will mark the animals they would like considered for their adoption program if the animal is not claimed by the owner. After the stray period, adoptable animals are available to be rehomed by the HBSPCA. Any animal not selected by the HBSPCA can then be selected by one of the City's rescue partners.

From June through August, 2017, the length of stay (LOS) for shelter animals varied from three days to 78 days. The average LOS for an animal waiting to be taken by HBSPCA or rescue organization for their adoption programs was ten days, however, some of this time is a direct result of HAS policy of holding strays for three days.

The extended LOS periods also increases costs in animal care and medical expenses. Sheltering costs plus any additional medical expenses acquired during the extended LOS are not recovered as animals are transferred to outside agencies at no charge.

An adoption program would allow the City to recover some of these costs through adoption fees.

Table 1: Cost to the City for the basic sheltering of cats in 2016 Animal Services

Number of Cats	Triage Expense	Daily Food & Sheltering	Food & Shelter for 3 Day Hold	Total Cost
Cost per cat	\$19.38	\$10	\$30	\$49.38
Transferred to HBSPCA 680 cats	\$13,178	\$6,800	\$20,400	\$33,578
Transferred to Rescue 710 cats	\$13,760	\$7,100	\$21,300	\$35,060
Total transferred to outside adoption programs 1,390 cats	\$26,938	\$13,900	\$41,700	\$68,638

Although HAS no longer euthanize healthy animals to create intake space for more animals, the health and mental state of an animal can deteriorate while waiting in the shelter for a rescue to come forward. An animal that was once considered healthy can

become stressed, sick or aggressive in the shelter environment. Unfortunately, the end result is euthanasia for poor health, behavioural or temperament reasons.

When the number of animals at the City's shelter reaches capacity, and partnering organizations are also at capacity, the unfortunate result is closing the shelter to the intake of animals, mainly cats. When the shelter closes to intake, the City is not providing services to the public or animals in need.

There is a loss of revenue associated with intake fees during the closure periods. In 2016 the shelter closed for the intake of cats on three occasions for a combined total of 26 days. The City has no control over when the rescue partners will take animals from the shelter and this has a direct impact on the function as an animal shelter open to the public.

Best Practices of Area Municipalities

As part of the review, staff researched and discussed best practices with other municipal shelters. Most municipalities that operate an animal shelter also have an adoption program to rehome lost, unclaimed, and owner surrendered animals. Some municipalities contract the services out to a private contractor or organization. Information concerning other Municipal Animal Shelters is attached to this Report as Appendix "B".

Most municipalities only utilize rescue groups and humane societies to rehome the animals that are not suitable for the municipal adoption program such as animals that have medical issues or require rehabilitation.

The City, in the absence of an adoption service, has been supplying the adoptable animals to the HBSPCA first and then offering the remaining adoptable animals to rescue organizations. Therefore, the City has been generally left with those animals that are difficult to rehome.

Takeaways from the other municipal adoption programs are:

- Adoption is an important element in reducing euthanasia. For every adoptable pet that comes into the shelter there needs to be homes for them to go to;
- Adoption pricing needs to be flexible to allow special needs animals to be adopted, i.e. bonded pair, seniors, or medical cases;
- Adoptions will gain traction over time: Flood social media with ads, use City's website for pet of the week, low cost promotions, discount days, no cost days, etc.;
- Utilize satellite partners; veterinary clinics, flower shops, pet food stores, libraries, place animals in area businesses. It encourages adopters to be patrons of the business or organization;

- “Finder Interested Form”: If a person brings an animal in and it is not claimed, they can have it back after it is spayed / neutered and vaccinated;
- Adopter agrees to take the pet to local veterinarian for free vet exam within three days. Engage veterinarian community in providing free vet exams. Creates a relationship with a veterinarian for future care; and,
- Use a tiered adoption price system to reduce length of stay for cats in the shelter. This will provide better health for cats, maintain capacity and reduce shelter care costs for older cats.

Public Engagement

Staff actively engaged the community in the consideration for a municipal adoption service through an on-line survey. Over 560 people responded to a series of questions concerning animal adoption. Results of the survey are attached to this Report as Appendix “C”.

The public survey indicated 88% support for providing a municipal adoption service and 92% of respondents indicated that they would consider adopting from HAS in future.

The public was asked if a fee should be charged to the HBSPCA or rescue organizations for animals that are given away in effort to recover some of the costs associated with shelter care. The public was split on this response; 33% in favour, 47% opposed and 20% was uncertain.

Rescue partners were also surveyed regarding a municipal adoption service and their capacity to take animals. Seventeen of the 21 rescue organizations that responded were in favour of HAS providing an adoption service and would continue to collaborate and work with HAS to find homes for adoptable animals. Their capacity to care for animals ranged from two to 35 animals with an average capacity of eight animals.

Many rescue partners expressed concern over HAS working solely with HBSPCA in that it would leave rescues with sick animals or ones with behavioural issues.

Cat Adoption Pilot at Satellite Location

As part of the feasibility study for a municipal Animal Adoption Service, staff piloted a cat adoption program through PetSmart Charities of Canada at the PetSmart Stoney Creek location. The framework for an adoption program was established using this satellite location to showcase the animals.

The adoption fee used for the pilot program was benchmarked at \$150 per cat as this is the average cat adoption fee charged by area municipalities. Senior or medical issue cats were adopted at a discounted fee. The cats selected for the test were adults, seniors, kittens and minor medical cases.

The adoption pilot was very well received and supported by the public on social media. In two months of operation, over 30 cats and kittens were adopted through the pilot.

The adoption pilot operated as a revenue neutral program as outlined in the Pilot Cost Analysis attached to this Report as Appendix "D". It is estimated that a minimum of 200 cats could be adopted annually using satellite locations such as pet food stores, veterinary clinics and local businesses to showcase the adoptable animals.

The mission of the program was to rehome adoptable shelter animals. As such, any cat that did not present well in the store-type environment was offered to rescue partners. These adoptable cats were already vaccinated and altered which is a welcomed cost relief for the rescue partners. HAS understand that collaboration is important in finding homes for animals and supports and recommends the continuation of working with HBSPCA and rescue partners to place every adoptable animal in a permanent home.

Staff acknowledges the value and impact that providing an adoption program will have on the lives of the animals that they care for daily. Many staff donated personal time toward creating the framework for an adoption program and operating the pilot. Staff were fully engaged and empowered by the adoption program.

Stoney Creek Shelter – 345 Jones Road

A municipal adoption service was provided at the Jones Road Animal Shelter in Stoney Creek until 2006. The shelter was closed after considerable reduction to the shelter's operating budget and a cost benefit analysis indicated that not enough animals were being adopted to cover the cost of operating the shelter.

The Jones Road Shelter has recently been prepared as a rabies confinement area. Public Health has utilized this facility for a low-cost rabies vaccination clinic. This facility can be used as an education facility for responsible pet ownership, community outreach for citizens and their pets, dog bite prevention and City staff training.

It is estimated that to operate an adoption service from this facility would require a minimum annual budget of approximately \$220,000 to cover two FTE staffing and building operating costs. This estimate does not include start-up costs, food and medical and transportation expenses associated with caring for the animals. Operating animal adoption from the Stoney Creek facility is not feasible at this time as no budget enhancement has been requested with the adoption pilot recommendation. However, the Stoney Creek shelter could be utilized for temporary adoption events and microchip clinics.

Engaging the Community

Medical care is a major expense in operating an adoption program. As a responsible animal shelter, it is necessary that all adoptable dogs and cats are sterilized and vaccinated against rabies prior to being placed for adoption. Local veterinarians are supportive of the adoption initiative and have provided the City with a reasonable rate to spay / neuter animals for the adoption program.

The City, as a part of its municipal adoption program, will require all pets to be taken to a qualified veterinarian within 72 hours of adoption. This will not only ensure that the pet is healthy coming from a shelter environment, but it also establishes a relationship with a local veterinarian for the pet's ongoing care.

In addition, HAS partnered with the University of Guelph Ontario Veterinary College for the spaying / neutering of suitable cats and dogs under the veterinary surgery program. This is an excellent program for the City of Hamilton to be engaged in. The surgery training program is offered to HAS several times a year. Animals are spayed / neutered at no cost to HAS and several animals can be altered in one surgery appointment resulting in minimal transportation costs. Any additional animals that are altered are given to rescue organizations for their adoption program.

Most municipalities utilize volunteers and foster families to assist with the adoption programs. A volunteer / foster program would engage citizens in the adoption plan. Volunteers and foster families would enhance existing operations and promote Animal Services in a positive manner.

The volunteer program has been developed in conjunction with the adoption pilot. A volunteer program will complement the existing services that HAS provides. The animals in the shelter will benefit from the added social attention and the interaction will enrich the lives which in turn will make the animals more adoptable.

Through the use of foster homes, animals that do not do well in a shelter environment can be fostered in a home until ready for adoption. Fostering animals in a home is a much healthier environment than a shelter. As a result, medical costs for these animals and the shelter may be reduced. Also, a foster program will assist with the intake constraint as healthy adoptable animals are transferred into homes and not staying in the shelter.

Donations

HAS receives charitable donations toward medical costs of animals suitable for adoption and to provide comfort and care of animals while staying in the shelter. For example:

- A direct donation was received for a special needs cat that had been waiting in the shelter for a lengthy period of time. The donation covered the cost of medical testing and the long term resident cat was able to be adopted from HAS; and,
- A significant donation was given to HAS to create a healthier environment for the cats at the Dartnall Road Shelter and provide a “comfort and enrichment area”. The area has been designated as “First Responders Room”. This area of the shelter can also be utilized for potential adopters to interact with cats before adopting.

There is potential for the amount of donations to increase with the establishment of an adoption program. The public may be inclined to donate toward the medical costs of shelter animals if it will help the animal become a viable adoption candidate. Most municipalities accept donations to help better the lives of the shelter animals.

Measuring Program Outcome

The animal shelter industry has changed considerably over the past 15 years. Most shelters have seen a decline in the number of animals entering the shelter. Past practice was to bring the cats into the shelter and euthanize. Staff discontinued the practice of picking up healthy stray cats in effort to manage the intake volume.

Present focus is on educating owners on the responsibility of having a pet; providing their pet with identification, spaying / neutering their pet and to acquire the pet from a reputable source or consider adoptions. All of these areas affect the operation of the animal shelter. An adoption program is another avenue for positive progressive change for the shelter.

The metrics used to measure the success of an adoption program will be;

- Number of animals adopted;
- Length of stay (LOS);
- Live release rate (live outcomes for domestic animals);
- Euthanasia rate;
- Impact on Animal Services staff and financial statistics; and,
- Impact on community partners / stakeholders.

There are many intangible benefits to the City providing an adoption service.

Benefits of an Adoption Program	Challenges of an Adoption Program
<p>Societal Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Pets can enrich the health and well-being of their owners ✓ Rescuing an animal can be emotionally rewarding ✓ Adopting a shelter animal saves lives ✓ Improve image of City of Hamilton and HAS (no longer a “kill shelter”) ✓ Positive humane outcomes for animals waiting in shelter ✓ Engaging community in volunteering and fostering ✓ Being part of the solution of rehoming adoptable pets ✓ Stopping the cycle of unwanted litters by ensuring sterilization before leaving shelter ✓ Educating public on responsible ownership thus reducing number of animals entering shelter ✓ Increase in revenue through public donations to assist adoptable animals ✓ Eligible to apply for grants to subsidize food costs, education and animals service related programs ✓ Partnering with the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Additional workload for staff ✓ Financial pressure of operating a full program ✓ Full program would require a facility, staff and budget ✓ Not a profit making initiative ✓ Impact on HBSPCA’s selection of animals ✓ Impact on Rescue Partners – concerns expressed that they would be left with medical and elderly animals

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

Benefits of an Adoption Program	Challenges of an Adoption Program
<p>Work Place Investment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Staff morale – engaged and empowered, collective ownership for project, pride in work ✓ Adoption is an investment in employees; staff are supportive and engaged in the workplace ✓ Aid with employee wellness; shelter environment and euthanasia has high impact on stress and emotional welfare of employees ✓ With an adoption program, HAS will be able to manage the flow of animals in the shelter ✓ Enhance existing relationships with rescues and HBSPCA – encourage a team approach. The ultimate goal is to find placement for animals that come into the shelter ✓ Providing rescue partners with readily adoptable pets through Rescue Roster process ✓ Ability to apply for pet charity grant 	

Partnership with HBSPCA

Animal Services has partnerships with many rescue organizations in the community including the HBSPCA. Establishing a joint animal adoption program between HAS and HBSPCA would be difficult due to the fundamental differences in both HAS and HBSPCA’s structure and philosophy. Both parties agree that humane and ethical treatment is the best outcome for the animals. However, the mandates for each party differ. HBSPCA is an affiliate of the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) and is responsible for the protection of animals from people. Animal Services is responsible for the protection of people from animals. Furthermore, the HBSPCA is a private organization with private funding sources.

HAS is the pound and is the only party authorized to shelter stray and unowned animals. As such, HAS is under the lens of Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA). HAS is legally required to maintain and make available to OMAFRA all records concerning the disposition of all animals that come into the shelter. As per OMAFRA, any animal leaving the shelter to a rescue is still under the responsibility of HAS. All partnering rescue groups are required to sign an agreement to provide, upon request, the adopter’s information for each animal that was given to them by HAS.

Animal Adoption Pilot Program

A municipal adoption service can be provided by HAS and still maintain a collaborative relationship with HBSPCA and rescue partners. All groups share a common purpose in saving animal lives and can work together to achieve the goal.

A municipal adoption program is a natural continuation of animal services for the community. Allowing staff to engage in an 18 month pilot will allow for the assessment of the impact on the HBSPCA and rescue partners operations as well as staff requirements of HAS.

If approved, the initial focus will be on cats as there is an overabundance at the shelter. Prior to adoption, all cats will be;

- Spayed / neutered to eliminate the chance of any additional litters;
- Microchipped and provided with a lifetime cat registration for identification if the cat becomes lost; and,
- Vaccinated against rabies in effort to combat the rabies concern facing the City.

Through adoptions, the City can ensure that all dogs and cats leaving the shelter are altered. This will prevent unwanted litters and could potentially, over time, reduce the number of unwanted animals coming into the shelter.

The adoption fees need to be set at a cost that encourages the public to adopt a shelter pet. The adoption fee would recover some of the sheltering cost as well as the cost of spaying / neutering, vaccinations, microchipping and licensing. The set adoption fees will be the subject of an upcoming report if a municipal adoption program is approved by Council.

Adoptions would be advertised through Facebook, E-Adoptions, featured on the City's website and through other popular social media avenues such as Petfinder. Potential adopters are utilizing social media and searching for pets electronically rather than touring a shelter since a visit to a local shelter can be too emotionally difficult for some individuals.

Pets will continue to be showcased through local pet food stores as well as other local businesses. Satellite locations allow the pets to be brought into the communities. The more avenues for adoption will result in more animals being saved.

Any readily adoptable pet that cannot be rehomed by HAS will be offered to rescue partners on a rotation basis in effort to be fair and equitable to all partners.

Adoptions will allow the opportunity for a shelter animal to have a second chance at life. There are never enough adoption opportunities for the animals that come into our care. Limiting adoptions to the existing partners, (HBSPCA and rescue groups) is seriously limiting the lifesaving potential within our City.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

See Appendix “E” to this Report for alternatives.

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Community Engagement & Participation

Hamilton has an open, transparent and accessible approach to City government that engages with and empowers all citizens to be involved in their community.

Economic Prosperity and Growth

Hamilton has a prosperous and diverse local economy where people have opportunities to grow and develop.

Healthy and Safe Communities

Hamilton is a safe and supportive city where people are active, healthy, and have a high quality of life.

Our People and Performance

Hamiltonians have a high level of trust and confidence in their City government.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix “A”: Animal Services – 2016 Shelter Intake Statistics

Appendix “B”: Municipal Animal Shelters

Appendix “C”: Public Engagement Survey

Appendix “D”: Adoption Pilot Cost Analysis

Appendix “E”: Alternatives for Consideration

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