



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

TO:	Chair and Members Planning Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	December 3, 2019
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Animal Adoption Pilot Program (PED18004(b)) (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(S)

- (a) That the Animal Services Animal Adoption Program, with an enhancement of one FTE, Animal Adoption Program Coordinator, fully funded by adoption revenue, be referred to the 2020 Budget Deliberation process;
- (b) That the item respecting the Animal Adoption Pilot Program be identified as complete and removed from the Planning Committee Outstanding Business List.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On February 28, 2018, Council approved Item 11 of Planning Committee Report 18-003 directing staff to commence an 18-month Animal Adoption Pilot Program to assess the impacts the program would have on current operations and the City’s rescue partners.

The Adoption Pilot Program has been very successful in adopting 745 pets into permanent homes and transferring over 800 pets into the care of rescue partners. The Adoption Pilot Program generated \$103,048 in new revenue through the collection of adoption fees. There was a significant increase in the financial donations received from the public during the term of the pilot. Donation money provided for the medical treatment needed to prepare the animals for adoption. Rescue partners have expressed support for a permanent municipal adoption service. The public image of Hamilton

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.

Animal Services (HAS) has been improved and the City has received accolades for taking the step into providing an animal adoption service at the municipal shelter.

Staff are recommending that animal adoptions be a permanent program within HAS with the addition of an Animal Adoption Program Co-ordinator and that the position be fully funded through Animal Adoption Program Revenue.

Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 8

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: One additional FTE is required to successfully manage and co-ordinate the Animal Adoption Program at an estimated cost of \$90,000. The Animal Adoption Pilot Program received \$103,048 in new revenue through the collection of adoption fees over the 18-month pilot period. A permanent Animal Adoption Program should generate approximately \$90,000 annually as Adoption Fees are increased and the popularity of the program expands. There will be no impact on the levy. It should be noted that a total of \$36,167 from the Animal Kindness Donation Program was utilized to cover the cost of medical treatment the animals needed to prepare them for adoption. Using the donation money reduces the City's medical costs associated with the lifesaving and treatment of animals and preparing them for adoptions.

Staffing: One additional FTE is required to support current staff in managing and co-ordinating the Animal Adoption and Foster Programs. The Animal Adoption Program Co-ordinator will enhance and expand upon the existing program. A Veterinary Technician position is best suited as the Adoption Co-ordinator to assist in animal health and adoption support.

Legal: The City has the authority to adopt out the animals that it impounds. The animal adoption fees have been added to the City's User Fees and Charges for Services, Activities or the Use of Property by-law.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On February 11, 2015, 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), and report back to the Planning Committee.

On February 28, 2018, Council approved Item 11 of Planning Committee Report 18-003 directing staff to commence an 18-month Animal Adoption Pilot Program to allow a full

review of the impact an adoption service would have on current operations and the City's animal rescue partners.

The 18-month term for the Animal Adoption Pilot Program is complete and the impacts have been assessed. Staff are recommending the approval of the Animal Adoption Program.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

N/A

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

HBSPCA, Rescue Partners, PetSmart Charities and PetSmart Canada and other Municipal Animal Services (Burlington, Toronto, Brampton and Mississauga) were consulted in the preparation of this Report.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

The City of Hamilton is one of the few municipalities without an adoption service in a municipal animal shelter. Animals that come into the care of the municipal shelter are lost, found, stray, abandoned or owner surrendered. Without an animal adoption service, the City relies on rescue organizations to take the adoptable animals as the alternative would be euthanasia. The need to implement an Animal Adoption Program was identified in a report approved by Council on February 28, 2018.

Council directed staff to undertake an 18-month Animal Adoption Pilot Program and assess the impact on current operations and rescue partners.

The metrics to be used to measure the 18-month pilot program were;

- number of animals adopted;
- live release rate/euthanasia rate;
- impact on staff, shelter operations and finances; and
- impact on community partners.

Adoption Pilot Program

Over the 18-month pilot period, staff were able to find adoptive homes for 745 pets. As part of the adoption protocol, each pet was spayed/neutered, given appropriate vaccinations including rabies, microchipped for identification, dewormed and treated for fleas.

Pets were spayed/neutered to prevent unwanted litters and further breeding. All dogs and cats were vaccinated against rabies to combat the rabies concern facing the City.

Many pets that came into the shelter required additional medical treatment to prepare them for adoption. The wellbeing of pets is important to potential adopters. Treatments such as teeth extraction, dental cleaning or tumour removal were needed to prevent future medical illness. Funds from The Animal Kindness Donation Program were utilized to prepare the pets medically for adoption. The following medical procedures were performed in during the pilot;

- 282 spay/neuters;
- 917 rabies vaccinations;
- 480 viral tests (FIV for cats, heartworm for dogs); and
- 55 urinalysis/blood panels.

Staff registered each microchip with the microchip company (24 PetWatch) to ensure that the pet would be returned to the owner if lost. This is a step that many pet owners overlook or neglect to complete. Also, dogs were issued a free one-year municipal dog licence. Cats were issued the City's Lifetime Cat Registry tag at no charge. By providing and registering the initial licence the pet's owner information will be readily available to staff if the pet is ever lost. Both licences and microchips are important pieces of identification that reconnects lost pets with their owners and reduces the number of found pets entering the shelter.

Pet owners were also offered 30-day free pet insurance. Pet insurance assists owners with the cost of any unforeseen medical treatment of their new pet. As newly adopted pets are coming from a shelter environment, there is concern of contagious disease or stress related illness that may not present itself at the time of adoption. Encouraging adopters to sign up for the free pet insurance will reduce the number of requests from adopters for the City to pay for post adoption medical treatment of newly adopted pets that may develop unforeseen illnesses.

In addition to opening the municipal shelter doors to adopters, staff took adoptable pets to PetSmart, Stoney Creek, where they could be showcased and seen by the public. This was a very positive initiative as over 300 pets were adopted through this initiative. Staff also attended PetSmart National Adoption Events held over four weekends throughout the year. These events were beneficial in finding adoptive homes for our pets and for promoting the animal related services that the City provides. Expanding adoptions to additional locations has been considered. However, there is not enough staff to manage multiple adoption locations.

Live Release Rate/Euthanasia Rate

The City's Live Release Rate (LRR) is a calculation of the number of animals that enter the shelter verses number of animals that leave the shelter through adoption, transfer to rescue partners or owners claiming their pets. HAS provides an end of life service

(euthanasia) for pets when owners do not have a veterinarian to euthanize the pet. These pets were not included in this statistic as it is a service provided by the City.

The LRR for 2018 was 92% for dogs and 78% for cats. The LRR from January to August 2019 was 89% for dogs and 81% for cats. Euthanasia of dogs and cats were mainly for poor health or temperament reasons. Shelter statistics are attached to this Report as Appendix "A".

Collaboration with the animal rescue community is key. The City's ability to maintain a high LRR can be attributed to the continued collaboration with rescue partners and the introduction of the adoption pilot. This undertaking is commended by the public and animal welfare community.

Shelter Closure

One of the most challenging issues continues to be capacity to care for the volume of animals needing assistance. HAS discontinued the practice of euthanizing healthy animals to create intake space in the shelter for more animals. When the shelter is at capacity, the doors are closed to the intake of more animals.

The shelter continued to experience periods of closure to the intake of more animals during the pilot period. The shelter was closed to the intake of cats on three occasions in 2018 and five occasions in 2019. In 2019, there was also an abundance of rabbits brought into shelter forcing the closure to the intake of rabbits on two occasions.

The introduction of the adoption program assisted with the shelter's ability to stay open for intake. Cats that were ready for adoption were transferred to the offsite location at PetSmart, Stoney Creek, to create open space within the shelter.

The capability for the HBSPCA and rescue partners to take animals is also limited by their capacity of care. During the high season, the HBSPCA was not taking cats or rabbits and rescue partners were at capacity. This further exemplifies the need for an adoption program. There are more animals than adoptive homes.

Foster Program

In conjunction with the adoption pilot, a Foster Program was initiated. Fostering allows pets that are too young for adoption or recovering from a medical procedure to stay in a home environment until ready. Foster Team members provide care for bottle feeding kittens, pregnant cats, surgical recovery or pets that are not doing well and shutting down in the shelter environment. Fostering is also beneficial as it allows the pets true personality to come through. Shelters can be a stressful place for pets and they can develop unwanted behaviours or illness that result in making them unadoptable.

The Foster Program allows the public to assist with the adoption program and the operations of the City's shelter. Team members promote the adoptable pets and the work of HAS. Currently, the Foster Team has 33 members and continually accepting more applicants.

Impact on Staff & Financial Statistics

The implementation of the Animal Adoption Pilot Program impacted all staff. Staff understand the need for an adoption program and how it will give the animals a second chance. All staff were encouraged to be involved and take part in different areas of the program. Duties were realigned to accommodate the additional workload of the adoption program.

In addition to caring for the adoption animals, the Animal Care staff were trained on how to conduct adoption interviews and screening. Administrative staff took on the additional workload of legal agreements, documentation, registration and financial transactions associated with the adoption pilot. The Registered Veterinary Technician scheduled surgeries, provided additional medical treatment and monitoring of the adoption animals.

An Animal Adoption Program Co-ordinator is needed to oversee the program, co-ordinate adoptions and public events, develop policies and procedures and manage the Foster Team program. There is a need to develop and enhance the Adoption Program and bring it to the same standards as other municipalities.

Additional revenue sources are available with the implementation of a permanent Animal Adoption Program because the City's municipal shelter will be recognized as a pet friendly shelter. HAS will be eligible to apply for grants from pet food suppliers, veterinary resources, and pet retail companies such as PetValu or PetSmart Charities Canada. Any grants or incentives could alleviate some of financial pressure experienced by the municipal shelter.

Donations

HAS have been accepting charitable financial donations from the public since 2012. Donation money goes toward medical costs of shelter animals, providing enrichment and comfort as well as transportation of animals. Yearly donations typically have been between \$2,000 to \$8,000. There was a significant increase in donation money received when animal adoptions were introduced. The Animal Kindness Donation Program received an additional \$51,598 in public donations during the 18-month term of the pilot. A total of \$36,168 was used to medically prepare the pets for the adoption program. Donation money has allowed staff to save more animals where in the past the animal would have been euthanized in order to be fiscally responsible. The public has been very generous in donating to animal enrichment and medical causes.

Impact on Community Partners/Stakeholders

Since starting the adoption pilot, staff has seen an increase in the number of rescue groups that work with HAS to save lives. Currently, there are 55 rescue organizations that have signed an operating agreement with HAS. Staff has continued efforts to work respectfully with HBSPCA and our other rescue partners.

During the pilot, staff transferred over 800 pets into the care of rescue partners. Shelter Statistics attached to this Report as Appendix "A" show the number of animals transferred to the HBSPCA and rescue partners.

HAS supports the great work that other organizations are doing in the community. Staff make a conscious effort to transfer any adoptable animals waiting too long for adoption into the care of the rescue organizations. Rescue groups benefit by receiving a pet that is already spayed/neutered, vaccinated and microchipped.

In addition to readily adoptable pets, our rescue partners take on special needs animals such as animals with severe medical issues, animals that need rehabilitation or training, or senior animals looking for a palliative home.

Staff fully support promoting and advising the public to consider adopting from our rescue partners if our adoption program does not have what they are looking for. This has been promoted on the HAS Facebook page.

Staff met with the Director of the HBSPCA to discuss the impact of the Animal Adoption Pilot Program on their organization. No concerns were expressed and the HBSPCA advised that they have formed relationships with other animal organizations in need of assistance.

At the end of the pilot period, staff surveyed some of the rescue partners to determine the impact the program had on their organization. Rescues responded in favour of HAS having a permanent adoption program.

Constraints

One of the constraints in operating an adoption program at the 247 Dartnall Road location is the design of the building. The municipal shelter is where apprehended, lost and found and owner surrendered animals are sheltered; security and confidentiality regarding the animals in our care is important. Currently potential adopters are unable to enter the shelter and roam freely to view adoptable animals. The public must be accompanied by a staff member when entering the shelter to view adoptable animals. This process does take up staff time and resources. Efforts are being made to improve this situation by designating public viewing areas within the existing shelter. However, space and finances are limited.

Also, HAS shares a building with the HBSPCA but are not affiliated. There continues to be confusion for the public regarding the two entities. At present, the general public is unaware that the City provides animal related services. Efforts are being made to define the roles of each organization and to develop a media campaign to explain the importance of each organization.

Moving Forward

The Animal Adoption Program will still maintain a collaborative relationship with rescue partners as this is key to giving pets a second chance. It is estimated that 500 pets could be adopted annually resulting in the net revenue generation of \$90,000 annually. With the addition of a Program Co-ordinator, the focus will be on obtaining grants and subsidies as well as expanding the program into the community. Through promotion and public awareness programs, citizens will learn that their City has taken the necessary step into animal welfare.

The Animal Adoption Pilot has been a successful program and has increased the City's lifesaving potential for the animals brought into the City's care and has created a full-service shelter for the community. There is continuous change and improvement in the animal welfare industry and the City has taken the necessary step to be a part of this movement.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

An alternative would be to discontinue the Animal Adoption Program and rely solely on outside agencies to take the City's animals. This alternative is not recommended as rescue partners do not have the capacity to take the additional animals. This concern was addressed in the previous report recommending the Animal Adoption Pilot.

An alternative would be to euthanize animals that come into our care and are not claimed by their owner. This alternative would reduce sheltering and medical costs. This alternative is not supported by the public or rescue partners. The public would no longer donate to or support HAS initiatives.

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Community Engagement and 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.

Clean and Green

Hamilton is environmentally sustainable with a healthy balance of natural and urban spaces.

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 2018/2019 Shelter Statistics

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