



Hamilton

Agricultural & Rural Affairs Sub-Committee – Farm 911 Program Update

June 29, 2023

Presented by: Heather Travis

Background

At its meeting of January 18, 2021, the Agricultural & Rural Affairs Advisory Committee provided the following direction:

“That the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Advisory Committee respectfully requests that appropriate City staff be directed to develop a framework to provide emergency 911 signs to owners of unidentified farm properties in Hamilton, at their request, at no cost to the applicant.”



Background

Staff have completed the following tasks:

- Background research, including review of other municipalities, property query to determine number of potential eligible properties, and costing and resourcing options
- Formation of a staff technical working group
- Development of a draft policy framework

Projected timeline

Key dates:

- **June 2023** – circulation of draft policy to internal staff working group
- **June 29, 2023** – attendance at ARASC
- **July to August 2023** – update draft policy based on feedback received; re-circulate
- **September 2023** – attendance at ARASC to present proposed final policy and implementation framework
- **October 2023** – recommendation report to Planning Committee with final policy to be endorsed

Key questions for input / discussion

1. Legal / Non-legal Access Points

Question: Should Farm 911 signs only be available for legally established access points?

Considerations:

- Restricting the signage to legal access points only may reduce the effectiveness of the program if certain properties / fields are ineligible for signage
- Accesses that have not been legally established may be inaccessible to emergency vehicles

Suggested option:

- Include language in the policy clarifying that issuance of a sign does not equate to legalizing an access point and does not guarantee that emergency vehicles will be able to use the access point
- Include waiver as part of application

Key questions for input / discussion

2. Number of Permitted Farm 911 signs

Question: How many Farm 911 signs will be permitted per property?

Considerations:

- Many fields have more than one access point – assigning a separate Farm 911 sign to each access could increase the speed of emergency response
- Subsidized cost to City will increase if more than one sign is allowed per property

Options:

- Permit more than one sign per property, but allow staff discretion to determine where this is needed / appropriate
- Subsidize one sign per property to be provided at no expense to applicant, additional signs could require a fee

Key questions for input / discussion

3. City funding of signs – installation included?

Question: Should the City cover both the cost and the installation of the Farm 911 signs?

Considerations:

- ARAAC direction had instructed signs be provided at no cost to applicant
- Budget implications increase from approx. \$35,000 to \$129,000 if installation is included (based on assumption of 500 vacant eligible properties)

Options:

- Options range from installation being included in City subsidy to applicants being responsible for costs, or a hybrid approach.

Key questions for input / discussion

4. City funding of signs in perpetuity?

Question: Should Farm 911 signs be subsidized by the City at no cost to the applicant in perpetuity or will a 'sunset clause' be established?

Considerations:

- ARAAC direction had instructed signs be provided at no cost to applicant
- Some municipalities have included a 'sunset clause' which establishes a timeframe for signs to be provided for free, after which costs will be borne by the applicant. Provides greater certainty to City in terms of long term funding impacts.

Options:

- Establish a time period (eg. 1 to 2 years) for signs to be provided for free, or maintain sign subsidy in perpetuity
- If a sunset clause is included, will need to widely publicize program to ensure maximum uptake in initial period

Next Steps

- Staff will consider comments received at today's meeting, in addition to staff technical comments, and revise draft policy framework
- Staff will prepare a standard operating procedure for implementation of the Farm 911 program to be coordinated through Growth Management and Public Works
- Project update with proposed policy framework and implementation to be presented at September ARASC meeting
- Recommendation report targeted for October Planning Committee
- Staff will work with City Communications team to ensure that the program is widely shared in the rural area (upon approval) to encourage maximum uptake