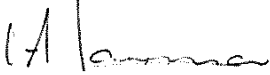




CITY OF HAMILTON
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Growth Management Division

TO:	Chair and Members Planning Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	December 5, 2023
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point Program (PED23209) (Wards 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 15)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	Wards 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 15
PREPARED BY:	Heather Travis (905) 546-2424 Ext. 2978
SUBMITTED BY:	Ashraf Hanna Director of Growth Management and Chief Development Engineer Planning and Economic Development Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That the Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point Policy, attached as Appendix “A” to Report PED23209, be approved.
- (b) That the amendments to the City of Hamilton Municipal Addressing Policy to implement the Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point Policy, attached as Appendix “B” to Report PED23209, be approved.
- (c) That \$94,850 from the Economic Development Reserve Fund (Account # 112221) be approved through the 2024 capital budget process for the Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point program.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Vacant agricultural farm fields in Rural Hamilton generally do not have municipal address numbers assigned. This lack of a municipal address number can create challenges for emergency services in locating the farm parcel in the event of an emergency. Farm 911 is a program with a goal to ensure that all vacant agricultural farm parcels are assigned an Emergency Access Point number to allow for ease of property identification and speedier emergency response.

In response to direction from the Agricultural and Rural Affairs Sub-Committee, staff are proposing to implement the Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point program in Hamilton. The program will run as a voluntary program and will be offered at no cost to eligible applicants, as per the direction from the Sub-Committee. Staff have confirmed that funding is available to support the capital costs associated with the fabrication and installation of the Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point signage. Staff operating costs can be absorbed through the existing complement of FTEs.

The Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point policy attached as Appendix “A” to Report PED23209 identifies the application requirements, criteria and process for the Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point program.

To ensure that this important public safety initiative will be communicated widely to the rural community, staff will work with City Communications staff to develop a marketing campaign targeted to Rural Hamilton upon approval of the program.

Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 9

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: A summary of the estimated capital costs for the program is provided below. The summary is based on the following assumptions:

- There are approximately 280 vacant agricultural properties which may be eligible for a Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point sign. Further, larger properties with multiple road frontages may apply for more than one sign per property;
- Assume half of eligible properties (140) will make application in the first year of the program. Of those 140 properties, 25% (35 properties) will request an additional Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point number and sign for a second existing access point on the property;
- Assume that 70 properties make application in the second and third years, with 25% (18 properties) requesting an extra sign each year. Future years will be reviewed on annual basis;
- Cost of sign fabrication (2023): \$70 / sign;
- Cost of sign installation (2023): \$188 / sign; and,
- Total cost of sign fabrication + installation (2023): \$258 / sign, plus assumed inflationary increase in future years;

Year 1:

Capital cost – sign fabrication: \$12,250

Capital cost – sign installation: \$32,900

Year 2:

Capital cost – sign fabrication: \$6,500

Capital cost – sign installation: \$17,600

Year 3:

Capital cost – sign fabrication: \$6,900

Capital cost – sign installation: \$18,700

Total capital costs based on the assumptions above represent approximately \$94,850 for the first three years of the program, which will be subsidized through the funds allocated from the Economic Development Reserve Fund. As per recommendation (c) of this Report, funding of \$94,850 for the program shall be approved through the 2024 capital budget process.

In terms of operating costs, staff in Growth Management will be responsible for reviewing and assigning Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point numbers and updating City mapping and staff in the Transportation Operations Division will be responsible for fabrication and installation of signage. These operating costs shall be absorbed through each Division.

Staffing: It is not anticipated that any additional FTEs are required to support the Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point program.

Legal: N/A

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Agriculture and Rural Affairs Advisory Committee

At its meeting on January 18, 2021, the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Advisory Committee provided the following direction to staff:

“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.”

This direction was confirmed by Council on February 24, 2021.

Important information arising from this direction is that the program, which is intended to be voluntary, shall be provided at no cost to the applicant. Funding for the program is identified in the Financial Implications section above.

Further, the program is to apply to ‘unidentified farm properties’. Staff have interpreted this direction to be applicable to vacant parcels in Rural Hamilton which are classified as agricultural farm fields, generally in the size range of 10 ha or greater.

What is Farm 911?

The Farm 911 program is also referred to as “The Emily Project”. The program was inspired by an unfortunate accident involving a young girl named Emily Trudeau on a family farm in Ontario. Emily was injured on a farm property which did not have a municipal address, making her location difficult for emergency responders to find. Emily unfortunately died from her injuries. The goal of the Farm 911 project is to ensure that all vacant agricultural farm parcels, which traditionally would not receive a separate civic address, are assigned an Emergency Access Point number to allow for ease of property identification and speedier emergency response.

Many municipalities in Ontario have already implemented this program including Ottawa, Belleville, Haldimand County, Clarington, Pelham, Prince Edward County, Northumberland and Wainfleet. Staff have conducted research into the processes and lessons learned from these other municipalities and have used the information to inform the Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point Policy attached as Appendix “A” to this Report.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

City of Hamilton Municipal Address Policy

The City’s current Municipal Addressing Policy was approved by Council in 2005. The policy outlines the rules governing the assignment of municipal address numbers, including how addressing is assigned to different types of land uses.

Staff have identified amendments which will be required to this Council-approved policy to facilitate the Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point Program, including the following:

- Policy 2(l) states that addresses will not be assigned to vacant lands until such time as a building permit application has been submitted. This policy is consistent with the general approach of not assigning addresses to vacant lands. Addressing is typically triggered by a building permit application or other type of development application. The Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point Program is an exception to this general approach in recognition of the size of vacant agricultural parcels in the rural area, and the fact that the parcels are actively farmed and may need to be accessed by emergency responders. Policy 2(l) will therefore be amended to recognize that the policy is speaking to the assignment

of municipal civic address numbers and not Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point numbers;

- Section 4.0 addresses Policies for the Rural Area. Staff propose to amend this Section to recognize the Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point program. Of note, Section 4(c) speaks to “911 Rural Numbering Signs”. The Rural 911 signs referenced in this policy are the green and white municipal address signs common throughout the Rural area. These signs display municipal address numbers and are assigned to occupied farm parcels typically at the time of a building permit application. These signs are not intended to be applied to vacant agricultural fields. There is also an application fee for the green and white signs. Section 4.0 will be amended to differentiate the green and white Rural 911 signs from the Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point program; and,
- Section 5.0 will be amended to clarify that a Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point Application Form may be submitted at no charge. Fabrication and installation of signage is also clarified to be free of charge.

The amendments to the Municipal Addressing Policy are attached as Appendix “B” to Report PED23209. Once approved, the Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point policy will be attached as a new appendix to the Municipal Addressing Policy.

Rural Sign By-law 02-312

The Rural Sign By-law 02-312 provides direction related to the green and white rural municipal addressing signs. Staff note that the Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point Program is different from the green and white addressing signs and therefore aspects of the Rural Sign By-law are not applicable to the proposed Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point Program. In particular, the Rural Sign By-law appears to apply to addressing of buildings on lots, whereas Farm 911 applies to vacant lots. Further, the By-law directs that a fee shall be paid for the services of providing a green and white addressing sign, whereas the Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point program is intended to be a free of charge service.

Staff do not propose to repeal or replace the Rural Sign By-law 02-312 as it remains applicable for addressing of new buildings in the rural area. Instead, as noted above, staff are proposing to amend the City’s Municipal Addressing Policy, attached as Appendix “B” to Report PED23209 to provide clarification to differentiate between the two types of rural signage and to provide appropriate direction for the Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point Program.

Staff further note that a new City-Wide Addressing By-law is proposed to be brought forward in 2024 as currently one does not exist. Staff will review at that time whether the Rural Sign By-law may be repealed if deemed redundant with the new Addressing By-law.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Agriculture and Rural Affairs Sub-Committee (formerly Agriculture and Rural Affairs Advisory Committee)

As noted above, the direction to implement a Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point program was provided by the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Advisory Committee in 2021. Since that time, staff has provided project updates at several meetings of the Agricultural and Rural Affairs Sub-Committee (ARASC). Most recently, staff provided a project update presentation and had a discussion on the proposed approach for the Farm 911 program on June 29, 2023 and provided the final proposed Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point policy for the review of the ARASC at the November meeting.

City Staff / Agencies

The following City divisions and outside agencies have provided input through the Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point Program working group and provided comments on the proposed policy:

- Transportation Division, Public Works Department;
- Information Technology Division, Corporate Services Department;
- Legal and Risk Management Services Division, Corporate Services Department;
- Economic Development Division, Planning & Economic Development Department;
- Hamilton Fire Department, Healthy & Safe Communities Department;
- Hamilton Paramedic Services, Healthy & Safe Communities Department;
- Hamilton Police Services; and,
- Bell Canada

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

1. Staff support the development of the Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point Program as directed by the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Sub-Committee for the following reasons:
 - Addressing and property identification is key to public safety: emergency services personnel have confirmed that the addressing of vacant agricultural parcels through the Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point Program will improve their ability to locate and access these properties. Agricultural fields can be large and have multiple access points. Further, while the fields may be vacant, significant activity takes place on the parcels with farm workers and farm families working the fields in

sometimes dangerous conditions. The City recognizes the important role that municipal addressing plays in ensuring efficient access to properties in emergency situations, and this recognition should be applied to vacant agricultural parcels as well;

- Differentiating these signs through different colour signage (see below) makes it easy for emergency services to identify vacant properties as opposed to built properties;
- Other municipalities have successfully implemented the program: staff research has found that the Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point Program has been successfully implemented in numerous municipalities across Ontario. The City can benefit from the lessons learned in these other municipalities and staff have drafted the attached policy to use best practices used elsewhere; and,
- Available funding: Staff have reviewed the proposal in terms of estimated capital and operating costs and determined the program can be implemented free of charge to eligible property owners, as directed by the Agricultural and Rural Affairs Sub-Committee. Funding has been identified through the Economic Development Reserve Fund. Further, staff in impacted Sections have estimated the impact of implementing this program can be absorbed within the existing complement of FTEs (see financial impacts section above). Staff note that some landowners grant public access to their lands for recreational usage which provides further justification for offering the program at no charge.

2. The proposed Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point policy is attached as Appendix “A” to Report PED23209. Key points to highlight include:

- The program is being implemented as a voluntary program, and property owners will not be required to apply for an Emergency Access Point number. As further noted below, a public awareness campaign will be undertaken to ensure the program is widely marketed in the rural area.
- The Emergency Access Point program is applicable to vacant agricultural and rural properties only which otherwise would not receive a civic address through the normal course of a building permit or development application. All vacant agricultural parcels within Rural Hamilton will be eligible to apply for an Emergency Access Point number. Note that vacant properties are defined as those properties which do not contain a building or structure requiring a permit under the Ontario Building Code. As the Emergency Access Point program is intended to facilitate the addressing of farm fields, properties within the Rural Settlement Areas are not eligible for an Emergency Access Point number;
- A maximum of one Emergency Access Point number shall be assigned per existing access point. For large properties with multiple access points,

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separate Emergency Access Point numbers may be assigned to individual access points on the same property if it is deemed necessary to improve ease of identification of the access. Staff, in consultation with the property owner, shall determine if additional Emergency Access Point numbers may be required for additional existing access points on a property; and,

- The Emergency Access Point number shall not be used as a mailing address and is only intended to identify the location of an access point for emergency services. Further, the Emergency Access Point number does not permit further use or development of the property without proper municipal and /or other approvals.

3. Staff across various Divisions have worked together to design a process for implementation of the Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point Program. Key points of interest related to implementation include the following:

- As noted above, the direction provided by the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Sub-Committee was to provide Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point signs to applicants at no charge. The policy attached as Appendix “A” to Report PED23209 confirms this direction by identifying that there shall be no fee associated with a Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point application, and further, no costs associated with the fabrication or installation of the Emergency Access Point signage. Financial details are provided in the Financial Implications section above;
- Public Works staff have determined that the Farm 911 - Emergency Access Point signs shall be red with white numbering. This colouring will distinguish these signs from the standard green and white civic addressing signage in the rural area; and,
- Applicants will be required to sign a waiver included as part of the Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point Application Form. The waiver acknowledges that the assignment of the Emergency Access Point number does not constitute formal approval of the access by the City of Hamilton, nor does it guarantee that the access will be adequate for emergency vehicles. Where access is not adequate, emergency vehicles may not be able to enter the field. This waiver acknowledges that it is not uncommon for access to agricultural fields to be informally established for the purposes of farm equipment and vehicle use. Limiting the assignment of a Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point number to legally established accesses only would preclude a significant number of access points from being eligible for signage, and would therefore not fulfil the intent of the Farm 911 program. The waiver allows for the Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point number to be assigned but recognizes that the number does not guarantee emergency vehicle access.

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4. Staff recognize that a public awareness campaign will be important to communicate the availability of this program once approved. Staff are working with the City's Communications team to create a plan to spread awareness of the program using traditional advertising, social media and the City's website. Further, members of the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Advisory Sub-Committee including the Hamilton Wentworth Federation of Agriculture will also spread the message to their networks. Members of Council with rural wards may also make the availability of the program known. It is important to communicate the message widely, as the program is an important public safety initiative which will improve emergency response times in the rural area.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Do not approve the Farm 911 program. Applicants could still apply for a municipal address for a vacant property but the application would be at a cost and would not be differentiated from traditional address signs. Staff do not recommend this alternative.
2. Approve the Farm 911 program but require installation of Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point signs to be at the cost of the applicant. This alternative would reduce the estimated cost of the program from \$95,000 (as per recommendation (c)) to \$26,000.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix "A" to PED23209 – Farm 911 – Emergency Access Point Policy
Appendix "B" to PED23209 – Update to City of Hamilton Municipal Address Policy