

Animal Control By-law Review Working Group: Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 11 October 2017 at 4:30 p.m.

Falstaff Room, 2nd Floor, 82 Erie Street Stratford

Meeting called by: Ed Dujlovic, Director of Infrastructure and Development Services

Note taker: Stephanie Potter, Policy and Research Associate

Members Present: Ken Wood, Maxine Watson, Sharon Morrice, Christopher Koslowski, Pamela Bartlett

1.0 Review minutes of previous meetings

The Working Group adopted the minutes of the following previous meetings as printed:

- 1.1 17 January 2017
- 1.2 28 February 2017
- 1.3 11 April 2017

2.0 Discussion of Public Survey Results and items arising from the survey

2.1 Restricting the sale of cats and dogs in pet stores

- The working group reviewed the survey results, noting that completed paper copies of the survey were entered online, however, a significant number of paper copies were submitted that were not entered online because respondents only provided an answer for question one:

1. The Animal Control Bylaw Working Group has voted to restrict the sale of cats and dogs in pet stores and will recommend the following to Stratford City Council:

That Cats and Dogs cannot be offered for sale in pet stores in the City of Stratford;

That Cats and Dogs may only be offered for adoption in pet stores if they come from registered Humane Societies and/or

reputable animal rescue organizations (as defined by the City);

And That Cats and Dogs may only be offered for adoption in pet stores after they have been spayed or neutered.

Do you agree with this recommendation to Council?

a) Yes

b) No

- Some working group members expressed concern with the one-answer paper copies submitted, stating:
 - Online respondents were required to take the time answer every question and could not input multiple responses to skew the results by only answering one question, therefore an incomplete paper survey should be invalid;
 - Each single-answer paper copy was submitted by Ruffins Pet Store, and were completed by customers at the front counter. The source is inherently bias and thus skews the results and amounts to “stuffing the ballot box,” therefore the working group should not accept these results, as the validity of the data is not reliable.
 - Other working group members contended that the single answer paper copies are valid, stating:
 - This is honest feedback that was provided by members of the community, the source of the single answer copies and the completion of the entire survey is not relevant;
 - Each submission includes a name, phone number, and local postal code, multiple responses were not submitted by anyone, and there is also nothing to prevent anyone from submitting multiple responses online.
 - Staff informed the working group that the results are presented to the working group as received and it is for the working group to decide how to proceed.
- ⇒ **Motion: That the survey results for question one be presented to Council with the following information:**
- 250 responses were received online:
 - 196 (78%) support restricting the sale of cats and dogs in pet stores;
 - 54 (22%) do not support restricting the sale of cats and dogs in pet stores.
 - 186 paper copies were received that answered only the first question:

- 3 (2%) support restricting the sale of cats and dogs in pet stores;
- 183 (98%) do not support restricting the sale of cats and dogs in pet stores;
- The paper copies were completed at Ruffins Pet Store and submitted by Ruffins Pet Store;
- Each of the paper copies submitted has at least one of the following:
 - Name
 - Contact information (phone number or e-mail)
 - Postal Code
- The City received 436 total survey responses for question one:
 - 199 (46%) support restricting the sale of cats and dogs in pet stores;
 - 237 (54%) do not support restricting the sale of cats and dogs in pet stores.

⇒ **Carried: 3 in favour; 2 opposed.**

⇒ Sharon Morrice asked that her objection to the inclusion of the one-answer paper survey responses be noted in the minutes.

⇒ **Motion: The working group recommends that prohibiting the sale of animals at festivals and events (not including recognized adoption events) be added to the bylaw.**

⇒ **Carried**

2.2 Microchipping cats and dogs

- 66% of survey respondents support microchipping;
- Working group members expressed interest in making microchipping the only form of pet licensing in Stratford (i.e. – replacing metal tags with microchipping);
- Microchips are the most secure way to ensure that pets can be reunited with their caregivers. However, it is important that caregivers remember to update their personal information if they relocate;
- Many lost cats are not claimed because the caregiver cannot be located;
- It was mentioned that the majority of licensing renewals are completed by the humane society;
- Some working group members feel that there should be no annual licensing fee; others feel that it is an important education piece to ensure that the public

understands why we have licensing fees (e.g. to help fund animal control/humane society services);

- Some suggested that the licensing fee or microchip fee should be waived;
- It was mentioned that moving forward with changing the form of licensing to microchipping would need to be investigated by City Staff;

⇒ **Motion: The working group recommends that microchipping should become the form of cat and dog licensing in the city of Stratford**

⇒ **Carried**

2.3 Restricting cats from running at large

- Almost a 50/50 split in the survey;
- Working group expressed no interest in restricting cats from running at large but would like to encourage people to keep their cats indoors as part of public education;
- Recommend “cat stops” which sense motion and spray water at cats visiting neighboring properties.

2.4 Dogs running at large/being walked off leash

- Survey provided a strong indication that there are dogs running at large/being walked off leash, but not everyone is bothered by it;
- The working group supports enforcement of the conditions listed under the current bylaw with respect to dogs being walked off leash/running at large.

2.5 The need a second off-leash dog park

- The survey seemed to indicate that the issues with the current dog park are drainage (i.e. – mud) and that it is difficult to access without a vehicle;
- It was noted that the current Dog Park Association is not advocating for a second park, but for drainage solutions for the existing park. Furthermore, the current Association does not have the resources to manage a second dog park;
- It was noted that there is no revenue available for this in the parks budget;
- Working group members asked if the City might have land available to donate to create a second dog park that could be non-taxpayer funded;

⇒ **Action Item:** Working group members suggested that staff work with the Dog Park Association and local construction companies to see if there is any

excess pea gravel they might be willing to donate to the dog park to help mitigate the drainage issues.

2.6 Limiting the number of dogs per person in the dog park

- 58% of survey respondents support limiting the number of dogs allowed per person in the off-leash dog park;
- It was noted that the working group has already passed a motion to recommend limiting the number of dogs per person to two dogs per responsible adult. This motion was supported fully by the Dog Park Association representative who attended our last meeting;
- Working group members expressed concerns regarding enforcement. It was noted that under the current contract, the Humane Society enforces all animal related issues cited in the bylaw.

⇒ **Action Item:** Working group members asked to review enforcement at our next meeting when the current Animal Control contract is reviewed.

2.7 Backyard chickens

- The working group previously considered this issue and heard information from representative from the Perth District Health Unit. The working group deferred making a recommendation until the survey results were received;
- 70% of survey respondents would like to see backyard hens allowed in Stratford;
- Some working group members who have raised chickens in the past voiced concerns with allowing backyard hens due to health risks and the amount of work involved to keep the animals healthy;
- Some working group members feel this would be a valuable program so long as a strong educational component is included with it regarding animal care and sanitary needs/health risks;
- Working group members suggested launching the initiative as a pilot project but were concerned about what would happen to the animals in the program if the project was discontinued;
- It was suggested that backyard chickens be allowed on a permit basis, however, it was further suggested that it would be more efficient to set parameters that must be met if residents wish to keep backyard chickens;
- It was suggested that parameters be modeled after the City of Kingston's program;

⇒ **Motion: The working group recommends that residents be allowed to keep a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 4 backyard hens in the City of Stratford subject to parameters based on what is allowed in other Ontario municipalities and with the inclusion of a strong education program.**

⇒ **Carried**

2.8 Standards of animal care

- While there was no strong desire to update the standards of animal care in the survey (30%), it may have partially been because residents did not feel informed enough on this issue to comment;

⇒ **Motion: The working group recommends that the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies' "Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare" be adopted as part of the City of Stratford's Animal Control Bylaw:**

1. Freedom from Hunger and Thirst by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour;
2. Freedom from Discomfort by providing an appropriate environment, including shelter and a comfortable resting area;
3. Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment;
4. Freedom to Express Normal Behaviour by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind;
5. Freedom from Fear and Distress by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

⇒ **Carried**

2.9 Wildlife

- The issue of feeding wildlife has already been addressed in the 2016 consolidated wildlife feeding bylaw;
- Working group members wondered whether it is actually possible to restrict people from feeding wildlife on their own property (aside from enforcement issues);
- The survey revealed overwhelming support for the creation of a wildlife management strategy;
- **Action Item:** a wildlife management strategy was referred to the next meeting.

3.0 Updating licensing requirements

3.1 Breeders

- Pamela provided the attached overview of breeding/kennel licensing requirements;
- Working group members agreed that no further revisions were necessary, as the City licensing process is thorough and objective and requires rigorous documentation;
- It was noted that there are no separate requirements for breeders and borders – the current bylaw only applies to breeders.

3.2 Pets

- The working group discussed waiving licensing fees or waiving the fee the first year but having the pet owner pay for the microchip;
- Some objected because the revenue generated from pet licenses goes to the Humane Society;
- It was noted that only 30% of cats and dogs in this city are currently licensed, and licenses are easy to obtain; they are sold at pet store counters and through the City/Humane Society – we need better enforcement of licensing requirements.

4.0 Animal concerns protocol

- Working group members brought forward concerns regarding animal crisis procedures;
- Many resident so not know who to call when an animal is in crisis;
- Some know to call the humane society but there is no 24 hour service – there is no one to call in the event of an afterhours emergency;
- The police are only able to investigate cases of animal abuse that are in progress;
- Suspicions of animal abuse are referred to the humane society;
- Emergencies involving people always take precedent over animals thus cases are not always investigated;
- The OSPCA will not inform the complainant of the outcome of the case;
- It was suggested that the police should track reported cases of animal abuse/emergencies;

- It was suggested that residents should be able to make one call to report any animal issues;
- ⇒ **Action Item:** The working group deferred this matter until the next meeting when the Humane Society representatives will be present to discuss further

5.0 Innovative programming for feral and rescue cats

- The working group discussed programs that have been effective elsewhere for the placement of feral and rescue cats, including:
 - Tree House Humane Society's *Cat's At Work* program:
 - <http://www.cnn.com/2016/07/15/health/cats-chicago-rat-patrol/index.html>;
 - Empirical Brewery: <http://www.empiricalbrewery.com/cats/>;
 - Catalina Springs Memory Care and Pima Animal Care Center's *Bottle Babies* program: <https://www.sunnyskyz.com/good-news/1909/How-Kittens-Are-Giving-Nursing-Home-Residents-A-New-Sense-Of-Purpose>

6.0 Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:40 pm.