



Report to Council

Department: Office of the CAO
Division: Communications
Date: October 19, 2020
Prepared by: Alex Denonville, Manager, Communications
Report Number: Communications-2020-02
Subject: Update on EssexWorks System
Number of Pages: 6

Recommendation(s)

That Communications Report 2020-02 titled "Update on EssexWorks System" prepared by Alex Denonville, Manager, Communications, dated October 19, 2020 **be received.**

Purpose

To inform Council and provide a summary of the use of the EssexWorks Online Report a Problem platform by citizens.

In March of this year, the Town launched the EssexWorks Online Report a Problem solution. The platform, utilizes an online form on the Town's website and integrates citizen service requests directly into the current work order software. Since its launch, citizens have been able to submit information using their home computers or smart mobile devices.

The launch of the online report a problem option was a direct action item identified in the 2019-2022 Corporate Strategic Plan which called for the use of digital and web-based technology to "improve access to information".

This report and attached summary covers the time period between March 2 and September 16. Council will continue to receive quarterly updates about the use of the system.

Submissions

During this time period, the Town received 72 EssexWorks submissions from citizens. The submissions are broken down into the following categories: 14 Other/Unsure, 11 Property Standards, 7 Parks, playgrounds, and Splash Pads, 1 Sanitary Sewer, 3 Water, 9 Streetlights, Powerlines, and Overhead Utilities, 6 Stormwater and Drainage, 15 Roads, Sidewalks and Bridges, and 6 Signs and Traffic Signals. 11 submissions were open at the time of this report.

A graphic summary of the categories, average response and work order closure times has been attached for Council information.

To note, some categories of problem submissions are handled differently than others, which may impact overall response and notification times. Property Standards submissions, for instance, may take longer to close given the need to attend the property, initiate an investigation, and potentially lay orders of remediation. Similarly, the Streetlights, Powerlines, and Overhead Utilities and Sign and Traffic Signal category submissions may be forwarded to ELK Energy to complete the work. Submissions forwarded to ELK Energy are closed in the Town's system and the citizen is notified of that fact.

Response Times

As illustrated in the attached overview, Town staff completed work related to submissions in an average of seven days, including weekends, with 55 per cent of submissions being addressed within three days or less. Information about work completion and notification to the original submitter took an average of 14 days. Administration will continue to seek to enhance the process so submitters are notified about work completion as early as possible. To note, some submissions are closed immediately if they are not related to the Town of Essex (e.g. problem is located within a neighbouring municipality.) In those cases, the citizen is notified with information on the appropriate organization to contact.

Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has likely had an impact on the overall number of submissions as well as the types of submissions that have been made. Notably, relatively few submissions have been made in the Parks, Playgrounds, and Splashpads or Facilities problem categories. As restrictions continue to be lifted and community members and user groups return to visiting facilities more regularly, there will likely be an increase in submissions. Similarly, new signage and increased community awareness of the system will also likely increase the number of submissions.

Technical Issues

Earlier this year one category of problem submissions from the online form were not properly connected to the internal work order system, which meant a number of submissions were not addressed. This issue has since been rectified and all EssexWorks users whose submissions were not addressed were informed of the problem and work was conducted when/where possible. Administration is also conducting weekly reviews of submissions to ensure the issue does not repeat. These items were not included in the data analysis.

Similarly, due to a communication error between the online form and the internal work order system, some submitters were receiving multiple email responses confirming that their issues had been received. Administration is continuing to work with our online form provider to identify and fix the issue, at no cost to the Town. This issue has not impacted the work conducted in response to submissions.

Next Steps

Administration will continue to seek to improve response times on work action and notification to citizens, which includes the implementation of a formalized procedure/policy. New signage with Report a Problem submission information will also be implemented at Town parks and facilities.

Similarly, the other/unsure category is designed to capture submissions that fall outside of the identified categories. Administration will continue to monitor the types of problems submitted under this category to identify potential new categories to add to the form. Hazard trees, for instance, have been a consistent problem submissions under the other/unsure category. Administration will be adding a new “hazard tree” category to the online form to reduce the turnaround time needed to forward the submission to the appropriate division. Continued analysis of submissions from citizens will assist with the identification of potential new categories.

Submissions forwarded to ELK Energy will also be incorporated into a monthly report sent to ELK to ensure submissions which are beyond Town administration are acknowledged and addressed where possible.

Looking ahead, Council will continue to receive quarterly updates on the submissions and turnaround times on action and notifications to citizens.

Financial Impact

Not applicable. The administration of the EssexWorks Report a Problem falls under the regular operations of Town administration.

Consultations

Doug Sweet, Deputy CAO/Director, Community Services

Link to Strategic Priorities

- ☐ Manage, invest and plan for sustainable municipal infrastructure which meets current and future needs of the municipality and its citizens.
- ☐ Create a safe, friendly and inclusive community which encourages healthy, active living for people of all ages and abilities.
- ☐ Provide a fiscal stewardship and value for tax dollars to ensure long-term financial health to the municipality.
- ☐ Manage responsible and viable growth while preserving and enhancing the unique rural and small town character of the community.
- ☒ Improve the experiences of individuals, as both citizens and customers, in their interactions with the Town of Essex.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Update on Essex Works System New - Communications-2020-02.docx
Attachments:	- Essex Works Summary March to Sept 2020 FINAL.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Oct 14, 2020

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Nepszy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a period at the end.

Chris Nepszy, Chief Administrative Officer - Oct 14, 2020 - 1:58 PM