



Report to Council

Department: Department: Office of the CAO
Division: Legal and Legislative Services
Date: November 2, 2020
Prepared by: Shelley Brown, Deputy Clerk, Legal and Legislative Services
Report Number: Legal and Legislative Services-2020-14
Subject: Animal Control By-Law 1606 Revisions to Dog Tag Requirements
Number of Pages: 7

Recommendation(s)

That Legal and Legislative Services 2020-14 report entitled Animal Control By-Law 1606 Revisions to Dog Tag Requirements prepared by Shelley Brown, Deputy Clerk dated November 2, 2020 be received, and

That Part 3 of by-law 1606 – Licensing and Control of Dog, be amended to reflect the recommendations noted as follows:

- That one tag be issued for the lifetime of the dog;
- That there be one annual rate for all dogs whether they are spayed/neutered;
- That there be a flat-rate fee of \$20 for any dog tags purchased between January 1 and March 31 and a fee of \$40 for any dog tags purchased between April 1 and December 31 implemented in 2021;
- That an online electronic application be created and offered; and
- That Administration bring back for Council's consideration an amended and consolidated Animal Control by-law to reflect the items and changes noted and recommended in this report;

Purpose

Sections 9 and 11 of the Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, C.25 provides that a municipality may pass by-laws respecting matters including Animals (Section 11(3)(9)).

The Town of Essex, through its Animal Control By-Law, ensures that animals are kept and treated in a humane manner and that owners of animals provide good quality care to them.

Background and Discussion

In 2013 Council passed By-law 1236 which brought about major changes to the previous Animal Control By-law. In 2017 By-Law 1606 was passed to consolidate all of the amendments to date.

By-Law 1618 was enacted in 2017 to further amend By-Law 1606 to add a provision that permitted tags issued by another municipality to be recognized as valid by the Town of Essex. In 2019 Resolution R19-12-484 further changed the tethering restriction in the by-law from ten (10) hours per day to four (4) hours per day.

As a result of these minor amendments it is proposed that By-Law 1606 be consolidated into one by-law together with the proposed recommendations contained in this report.

The amendments proposed in this report address recommended measures arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic that will hopefully streamline the dog tag process by reducing the number of touch points and steps in the annual transaction thereby reducing the frequency of resident in-person contacts while also further promoting the availability of this transaction as an on-line service going forward. The intention of the proposed recommendations is to enhance the current level of customer service and improve the administrative operations of this tax subsidized program.

Accordingly the following recommended amendments to Part 3 – Licensing and Control of Dog are presented for Council's consideration:

Recommended Amendment Number 1: One Tag for the Life of Dog

Our Current Process

Each year the Town issues and provides a new dog tag for every dog licensed. In 2020 there were 3000 tags purchased at a cost of \$949.15. Dog tag renewal invoices are mailed out in January of each year. Once received, residents have until March 31 to purchase their tags at a discounted rate. If residents purchase their dog tags after March 31 they are subject to a fee that doubles and if purchased after June 30 they are subject to a fee that triples.

Residents can either come to the Main Office or the Harrow Arena to pay for and pick up their tag each year. Alternatively, residents can make their payment through their financial institution, Virtual City Hall or by mailing a cheque. Once payment is received, the tags are provided in person or are mailed to their home.

For residents that have not paid for their dog tag renewal by the beginning of June, the fee is tripled and then placed on their final tax bill. Anyone whose dog tag renewal was added to their tax account will then have their tag mailed to them directly.

With respect to postage to mail dog tags, it should be noted that in 2020 the cost to mail one dog tag was \$2.68 (\$1.83 per stamp plus approximately \$0.85 per envelope required by Canada Post). It is estimated that there are approximately 500 tags in total that are mailed each year.

Other Municipality's Processes

Currently most local municipalities in the county follow the same traditional approach and issue annual physical dog tags. At this time Leamington is the only local municipality that issues one tag for the life of the dog.

The following schedule outlines the timelines and fees for dog tags by municipality:

	Jan to Mar Spay/Neuter	Jan to Mar Not Spay/Neuter	Apr to Dec Spay/Neuter	April to Dec Not Spay/Neuter	Tag Issued
Essex	\$15.00	\$25.00	\$30.00/\$45.00	\$50.00/\$75.00	Yearly
LaSalle	\$18.00	\$22.00	\$36.00	\$44.00	Yearly
Tecumseh	\$20.00	\$20.00	\$35.00	\$35.00	Lifetime
Kingsville	\$20.00	\$20.00	\$40.00	\$40.00	Yearly
Lakeshore	\$20.00	\$20.00	\$30.00	\$30.00	Yearly
Leamington	\$20.00	\$20.00	\$40.00	\$40.00	Yearly
Amherstburg	\$15.00	\$25.00	\$25.00	\$35.00	Yearly

Our Proposed Process:

It is proposed that there be one tag issued for the life of the dog. Residents will continue to receive an invoice in January of each year. Only in the initial year of the new proposed process (2021) or when a new dog is first registered will residents be required to obtain their new one-time dog tag. This is the tag that they will keep for the remainder of the dog's life. Each year when they receive their renewal invoice they will simply need to make the payment by March 31 to receive the discounted price. Please note the majority of payments are received prior to March 31st. After March 31st residents will be required to pay the increased rate and invoices not paid by the beginning of June each year will continue to be added to their tax account (excluding tenants). It is the responsibility of the dog owner to notify the Town once the dog is deceased. If the owner fails to notify the Town when the dog is deceased, the fee will be added to their tax account (excluding tenants).

Based on the above administrative and financial savings, it is recommended that the Town issue one tag for the lifetime of the dog and only issue tags for new registrations or when replacing lost tags at the current fee of \$5.00.

Recommended Amendment Number 2: One Fee for all Dogs with One Fee Increase Annually

Prior to 2012 the fee for dog tags was \$10.00 (Spayed/Neutered) and \$20.00 (Not Spayed/Neutered) regardless of the time of year the tag was purchased. In 2012 the fee structure changed to \$15.00 (Spayed/Neutered) and \$25.00 (Not Spayed/Neutered) with a 3-tier structure of increasing prices depending on the time of the year the tag is purchased and whether the dog is spayed or neutered. There has been no fee increase since 2012.

While the Town of Essex has had great success with its spay/neuter voucher system as it relates to cats and efforts to control the feral cat population, the same concerns relating to feral dog populations do not appear to exist to the same extent or level at this time. The decision to spay or neuter a dog remains the decision of a responsible dog owner but certainly the Town in its Animal Control role, will continue with public education efforts that promote the value of spay/neutering and the importance and value of having a dog tag system.

For dog owners to receive the reduced rate for a spayed or neutered dog, the owner must provide evidence in writing to the Town. This verification process is cumbersome at times and most residents come into the office to provide the documentation. Eliminating this part of the process will make it easier for residents as they will no longer have to obtain proof from their veterinarian that their dog is spayed/neutered and drive to the office to provide such documentation to purchase and obtain their tags.

As indicated in the table, all of the local municipalities use a pricing model that provides for a one-time increased "late fee" if payment is not made for the tag by the end of March and the majority charge one rate whether the dog is spayed or neutered. To be consistent with local municipalities, it is recommended that one dog tag fee of \$20.00 be charged and that there be one fee increase to \$40.00 if not paid by the end of March as follows:

	If purchased between January 1 to March 31	If purchased between April 1 and December 31
Dog Licence Fee (per dog)	\$20.00	\$40.00

Online Application and Payments

COVID-19 has brought about many changes to how businesses operate. Reducing touch points and in-person contact has helped to prevent or slow the spread of the virus.

With the recommendation to have one dog tag for the life of the dog, residents no longer need to come into the office annually to pick up their tag and can make payments through their bank, Virtual City Hall or cheque in the mail.

To further reduce contact points and the need for residents to come into the office, it is recommended that an online application form for new dog tags be implemented so residents can complete and submit the form online. Town staff would process the application and create an invoice for the resident to pay either at their bank, through Virtual City Hall or by cheque via mail. Once payment is received, the dog tag would be mailed to the resident.

Regardless of the method chosen, an online application together with electronic payment methods will improve customer service provided to our residents as they will no longer be required to obtain their dog tag in person.

Summary of Recommendations

- That one tag be issued for the lifetime of the dog.
- That there be one rate of for all dogs.
- That a fee of \$20 for dog tags purchased between January 1 and March 31 and \$40 for dog tags purchased late (after March 31) be implemented starting in 2021.
- That an online electronic application be created.

Financial Impact

There will be no negative financial impacts.

Consultations

Jeffrey Morrison, Director, Corporate Services/Treasurer

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.