



Report to Council

Department: Office of the CAO
Division: Legal and Legislative Services
Date: September 3, 2024
Prepared by: Shelley Brown, Deputy Clerk
Report Number: Legal and Legislative Services-2024-04
Subject: Reallocation of Funds for Spay and Neuter Voucher Program and Trap, Neuter and Return Program
Number of Pages: 5

Recommendation(s)

That Legal and Legislative Services Report 2024-04 entitled Reallocation of Funds for Spay and Neuter Voucher Program and Trap, Neuter and Return Program prepared by Shelley Brown, Deputy Clerk dated September 3, 2024 be received;

That Council approve an additional \$6,175.84 in the 2024 year for the Trap, Neuter, Return Program to be funded from the Animal Control reserve;

That the Spay and Neuter Voucher value be increased from \$75.00 to \$200.00 and the number of vouchers available be reduced to 64 for feral cats and 5 for owned dogs and cats of low-income families.

Purpose

Council approval is required for expenses that fall outside of the approved budget and the reduction in the number of vouchers available and increase in value of Spay and Neuter Vouchers.

Background and Discussion

Spay and Neuter Voucher Program

Council first approved the spay and neuter voucher program for feral cats and owned dogs and cats of low-income families in 2013. The program has existed since that time with minor changes. Initially there were 200 vouchers for feral cats and 50 for owned dogs and cats of low-income families however after a few years of the program, the number of vouchers changed to 175 and 10 respectively. These amounts have not changed since that time.

In 2021 the usage of the program started to decline as shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1: Feral Cats

Feral Cats	2024*	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Vouchers Available	175	175	175	175	175	175
Vouchers Issued	112	125	112	57	118	175
Vouchers Redeemed	30	57	60	39	77	71

Table 2: Owned Dogs and Cats of Low-Income Families

	2024*	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Vouchers Available	10	10	10	10	10	10
Vouchers Issued	0	0	3	2	2	4
Vouchers Redeemed	0	0	0	1	1	4

*As of August 15, 2024

The COVID-19 pandemic, in part, can be attributed to the decline however it is difficult to pinpoint all factors. The statistics seem to indicate that residents are opting to use the Trap, Neuter and Return program rather than the Spay and Neuter Voucher program.

Spay and Neuter Vouchers are redeemed at local participating veterinarian clinics. Residents are responsible for paying any remaining balance charged by the clinic. This can be a deterrent to some residents who may not be able to afford these additional costs. It is believed that this has contributed to the declining usage of this program over the recent years (as shown in the tables above). As a result, Administration is recommending some changes to the program.

It is recommended that value of the vouchers increase from \$75.00 to \$200.00, and the number of vouchers be reduced to 64 for feral cats and 5 for owned dogs and cats of low-income families. The average number of vouchers issued from 2019 to 2023 is 61 for both feral cats and owned dogs and cats of low-income families. Additionally, Tables 1 and 2 of this report outline the utilization of the program showing its decline in recent years. It is likely that the utilization of the program will continue to decline in the upcoming years if there are no amendments made to the program. The proposed changes in the program will not affect the overall budget of \$13,875.00 for the program as the reduction in the number of vouchers issued is offset by the increase in the monetary value of the voucher.

It is expected that the increase in the monetary value of the vouchers together with increased promotion of the program will incentivize residents.

Trap, Neuter and Return Program

The Town commenced its Trap, Neuter and Return (TNR) Program in 2015 with an initial budget of \$4,875.00. In 2019, due to the success of the program, Council approved a funding increase from \$4,875.00 to \$9,750.00 along with any unused funds from prior years. The usage of this program has remained steady over the years as shown below:

Table 3: Trap, Neuter and Return

	2024*	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
TNR (Total cats Spayed/ Neutered)	112	119	109	113	113	128

*As of August 15, 2024

With the recent changes at the Windsor-Essex County Humane Society (WECHS), the cost of this service has increased significantly. Volunteers are having to use private clinics to spay/neuter cats at a fee sometimes 2 to 3 times the rate of the WECHS. This has resulted in the budget being almost fully depleted as of August 2024.

The TNR program has made great progress in controlling the feral cat population in the Town of Essex. Feral cats reproduce rapidly, producing a litter of up to 12 kittens several times in a year, and can become pests due to their sheer numbers, which can have a serious impact local bird populations as well as residents of the Town. It is imperative that we continue to control the feral cat populations to ensure that the success of the program continues.

To offset the increase in fees, it is recommended that the funds in the amount of \$6,175.84 currently in reserve funds be transferred to the 2024 Trap, Neuter and Return budget.

Conclusion

The Trap, Neuter and Return Program and Spay and Neuter Voucher Program have been very successful over the years. To ensure that they continue to be successful and that residents who use these programs receive the benefits, Administration will continue to monitor and evaluate the data and recommend changes as needed.

Financial Impact

The increased expense to the program of \$6,175.84 will be funded by the Animal Control Reserve.

Consultations

Joe Malandrucolo, Director, Legal and Legislative Services/Clerk

Kate Giurissevich, Director, Corporate Services

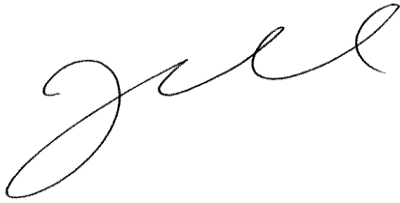
Link to Strategic Priorities

- Embrace asset management best practices to build, maintain, and continuously improve our municipally owned infrastructure.
- Leverage our Town's competitive advantages to promote jobs and economic investment.**
- Take care of our natural environment and strengthen the sense of belonging to everyone **who makes Essex "home"**.
- Deliver friendly customer service in an efficient, effective, and transparent manner while providing an exceptional working environment for our employees.
- Build corporate-level and community-level climate resilience through community engagement and partnership and corporate objectives.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Reallocation of Funds for Spay and Neuter Voucher and TNR Programs - Legal and Legislative Services-2024-04.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Aug 26, 2024

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



Joseph Malandrucolo, Director, Legal and Legislative Services/Clerk - Aug 23, 2024 - 9:02 AM

No Signature - Task assigned to Kate Giurissevich, Director, Corporate Services was completed by delegate Ann Marie Unis

Kate Giurissevich, Director, Corporate Services - Aug 26, 2024 - 8:56 AM



Doug Sweet, Chief Administrative Officer - Aug 26, 2024 - 9:05 AM