



Report to Council

Department: Office of the CAO
Division: Communications
Date: May 3, 2021
Prepared by: Alex Denonville, Manager, Strategic Communications
Report Number: Communications Report 2021-01
Subject: Quarterly Update on EssexWorks Platform and Customer Service Improvements
Number of Pages: 6

Recommendation(s)

That Communications Report 2021-01, entitled Update on EssexWorks System prepared by Alex Denonville, Manager, Strategic Communications, dated May 3, 2021 **be received**.

Purpose

To update Council on the usage of the Essex Works Report a Problem System, provide a summary of problems reported, methods of reporting, as well as an update on process improvements and analysis of response times.

Background and Discussion

At the May 6, 2019 Regular Meeting, Council approved a \$6,000 expenditure, utilizing funds from the March 2019 Municipal Modernization Grant, for the implementation of an Online Service Request System in the Town of Essex.

In March of 2020, the Town launched the product of that grant application, the EssexWorks Online Report a Problem platform. The platform utilizes a digital **form on the Town's** website and integrates citizen service requests directly into the CityWorks work order software. Since its launch, citizens have been able to submit information using their home computers or smart mobile devices. Council also received an update on the usage of the system at their October 19, 2020 Regular Meeting.

Since the launch of the system, and as part of a broader effort to improve customer service and identify opportunities for tracking and analyzing operations, administration has continued to seek to improve EssexWorks. With feedback provided by members of the public and Council, a number of improvements have been made.

First, two new problem categories have been created to reflect common submissions:

“Damaged Mailbox” and “Hazard Trees.”

Next, prior to November 2020 Town staff were utilizing two parallel work order tracking domains in CityWorks, with one derived from online submissions made through the EssexWorks portal, and the other derived from resident phone calls received by frontline staff. In order to simplify the process, work orders are now tracked under a single domain, which has a number of benefits, including:

- Citizens who call in issues are now able to receive follow-up notices via email, if requested. Follow-up notifications were not consistently conducted prior to this process update and citizens would often call back to request additional information.
- Divisional managers no longer need to track work orders in two domains, which has reduced administrative time.
- Capturing all submissions under one system **improves administration's ability to** monitor and analyze issues over time. Looking ahead for instance, managers may use prior year submissions to inform budget and operational planning for future years. This single domain also improves reporting to both Members of Council and the general public.

The final process improvement is specific to submissions made which are related to public infrastructure maintained by E.L.K. Energy Inc (ELK). Previously, problem submissions, such as burnt out streetlights, would be forwarded to ELK Energy and closed by Town of Essex staff. After feedback from submitters who identified that even though their submission had been **“closed” the work had not yet been** completed, administration met with ELK representatives and amended the internal process to treat ELK like other contractors who conduct work on behalf of the Town of Essex. Under the new process, Town staff receive and assess the request then forward the information to ELK. The original submission is only closed once a response from ELK is received. Frontline staff in the relevant departments have also been added to the contact list for ELK’s responses to ensure submissions can be closed as quickly as possible. While the overall process may increase average response times, it better reflects how the Town is responsible for the submissions made. It is also consistent with how other work involving contractors is treated.

Summary of Submissions and Response Times

The following section provides a summary of the submissions and average response and notification times. The three month period of January 1 to March 31 was chosen to align Council reporting to the calendar year and capture the period in which the above noted process improvements had been implemented. For reference, the Town received 117 submissions between September and December of 2020, with an average notification time of 28 days.

In the three month period between January 1, 2021 and March 30, 2021, Town staff received a total of 155 submissions, with 48 submitted via the online EssexWorks portal and 107 submitted over the phone. The attached pie chart breaks down these submissions by category.

On average, it took Town staff six days to complete work and 19 days to close a submission. Of all submissions, 18 per cent were closed within three days or less and 54 per cent were closed within two weeks or less. At the time of reporting, 16 submissions remained open.

It should be noted that there are some limitations to the data. Some submissions, for instance, may be closed quickly if they are not related to the Town of Essex (eg. problem with a County of Essex roadway.) Other statistics do not capture some of the operational details which contribute to responding to submissions and conducting work. Some work, tree trimming or **hydrant painting for example, is only conducted seasonally and “in bulk,”** so submissions related to those issues may not be closed for an extended period of time. Property standards submissions also require significant staff time to investigate properties and follow through with subject property owners. That said, administration and staff members who utilize the EssexWorks system are continuously seeking opportunities to improve internal processes and provide better service to customers and citizens.

Moving forward, administration will provide similar quarterly summaries as well as an annual report on EssexWorks submissions and other customer service improvements.

Financial Impact

N/A

Consultations

N/A

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.
- ☒ **Improve the Town's capacity to meet the ongoing and future** service needs of its citizens while ensuring the corporation is resilient in the face of unanticipated changes or disruptions.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Update on Essex Works System.docx
Attachments:	- Essex Works Summary Jan 1 to March 30 2021.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Apr 28, 2021

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".

Chris Nepszy, Chief Administrative Officer - Apr 28, 2021 - 9:19 AM