



## MUNICIPALITY OF **West Elgin**

### Staff Report

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**Report To:** Council Meeting  
**From:** Magda Badura, CAO/Treasurer & Jana Nethercott, Clerk  
**Date:** 2021-06-10  
**Subject:** Dog Licensing Program

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#### **Recommendation:**

That West Elgin Council hereby receives the report from Magda Badura, CAO/Treasurer and Jana Nethercott, Clerk re: Dog Licensing Program; and

That the costs for animal control be included in the general tax levy and the practice for charging a fee for dog licenses be discontinued as of January 1, 2022.

#### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a recommendation with respect to the charging of dog licenses in the Municipality of West Elgin.

#### **Background:**

The licensing of dogs in West Elgin is a very time-consuming process that often results in a standoff between the few dog owners who refuse to pay licensing fees and the Municipal Staff that try to collect said fees, spending countless hours dealing with changes, additions, subtractions and mail outs to remind residents to pay this fee.

The Municipality switched to a three-year dog tag in 2019 to try and offset the cost of door to door tagging annually. Currently the Municipality mails invoices out to residents at the beginning of the year for those who are registered in our system, with enumeration done at the beginning of the three-year term. Many dog owners fail to register new animals or then report the death of a dog once the invoices are mailed out and many just ignore these invoices until we add it to the taxes in addition to the administrative fee for moving this to taxes.

This year we have renewed 947 dog licenses for the total revenue of \$37,880.00  
Year-to-date we have reversed 79 dog licenses for the total loss of revenue of \$3,160.00  
As of Monday, June 7, 2021 we have 117 customers with outstanding balance totaling \$7,040.00  
Administering dog tags is a very labor-intensive task from January – August, as it requires regular updates, processing invoices, sorting, mail out, processing adjustments and answer customer inquiries. If money not collected by end of July, it requires a manual transfer from AR to taxes, this is not an automated process that can be completed with a push of a button, this task consists of manual entries to a roll#.

Most dog owners fail to see the need for these licenses as many dogs now are microchipped thus rendering the tag to reunite with the owner as useless. Many dog owners see the license fee as a cash grab for the municipality and not as a way to assist them with reuniting with a lost pet. The

fees collected as part of the dog licensing program pays for the animal control program within the municipality, which covers more than just dogs. Animal control benefits every resident within the municipality, not just dog owners and therefore the costs should be shouldered by all residents not just those with dogs.

Many municipalities in recent years have been switching to this model to reduce the administrative burden of Animal Control, with recently St Thomas considering this in Elgin County. In adjacent Counties, Woodstock moved to this model in January of 2021, Middlesex Centre in January of 2020, Strathroy Caradoc in 2010. These municipalities switched to a permanent tag system, whereby when a resident gets a new dog, they register it with the municipality and receive a permanent tag for a nominal fee (most are \$10 or under), thereby proving their dog is licensed if questioned while visiting another municipality and when the animal dies, they surrender the tag, however there will be no invoicing of annual fees, or repeated contact with dog owners to register their dog.

### **Financial Implications:**

The anticipated cost per tax bill is between \$7 and \$8 annually, depending on the next contract with our Animal Control service provider.

### **Policies/Legislation:**

Municipal Act, 2001