



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Reduction in Fees Policy for Toronto Animal Services

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| Date: | September 3, 2013 |
| To: | Licensing and Standards Committee |
| From: | Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards |
| Wards: | All |
| Reference Number: | P:\2013\Cluster B\MLS\LS13015 |

SUMMARY

Toronto Animal Services (TAS) promotes responsible pet ownership, pet adoption and pet identification through Chapter 349, Animals and through services it provides to residents of the City of Toronto.

TAS determines fees for approval by Council that are reasonable for residents and that offset the costs of specific services. In some cases, the fees may be a deterrent to responsible pet ownership. The Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards has authority in Chapter 442, Fees and Charges, Administration of, to allow for temporary reductions in adoption fees, impoundment fees, surrender fees and sheltering fees.

This report seeks broader authority by establishing a Reduction in Fees Policy for Toronto Animal Services that would delegate authority to the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards to reduce eligible fees based on a set of criteria. This would promote residents who may otherwise not have the ability to pay TAS' fees, to properly care for their pet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards recommends that:

1. City Council adopt the Reduction in Fees Policy for Toronto Animal Services as described in Attachment 1.

2. City Council repeal Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 442, Fees and Charges, Administration of, Sections 442-6F and G.
3. The proposed changes come into force on November 1, 2013.
4. City Council direct the City Solicitor to prepare the necessary bill(s) to make such by-law amendments as may be required to give effect to the recommendations in this report.

Financial Impact

The financial impact of adopting the recommendations in this report cannot be easily estimated as it depends on a number of factors, including the number of requests, the number of pet adoption campaigns, the number of animals adopted, and the types of fee reduction requests.

2013 budgeted revenues for Toronto Animal Services is \$2.7 million. Staff are estimating that there is a potential of a 5% reduction in revenues when this policy is implemented on November 1, 2013. This would result in reduced revenues of approximately \$22,500 for the remainder of 2013 and approximately \$135,000 for 2014.

Despite the loss of revenue associated with fee reductions, there are considerable savings incurred in terms of shelter operations with fewer animals. The extent to which such savings may offset the revenue forgone is dependent on the resources the animal requires multiplied by the number of days that it would otherwise have stayed at the shelter. Sheltering costs include food, staff time (to feed, clean and otherwise take care of the animals), the expenses associated with the physical space and the administration of the operations.

As the policy would not come into force until November 1, 2013, staff are not expecting many requests for the remainder of 2013. All requests and approvals will be recorded and tracked. Any resulting changes in expenditures or revenue will be reported on during the annual operating budget processes.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

City Council, at its meeting on April 12 and 13, 2011, adopted the report headed Authority to Reduce Adoption, Sheltering, Surrender and Impoundment Fees for Dogs and Cats. City Council delegated authority to the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards to reduce these fees for compassionate reasons.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2011.LS2.4>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The expenses incurred by the City to shelter, feed and provide necessary services to dogs and cats in TAS facilities are much greater than potential revenue. TAS staff knows from experience that a reduction in fees can be an effective way to manage the number of animals in shelters, provide incentive for adoption, provide incentive for pet owners who do not have the financial means to reclaim lost pets, address the issues of dog and cat overpopulation and minimize euthanasia. Providing the Executive Director an ability to waive or reduce fees avoids situations where TAS staff must refuse to accept surrendered animals or refuse to allow some owners to claim their animal based upon financial constraint or hardship.

COMMENTS

Under the City of Toronto Act, the City may pass by-laws that regulate or prohibit respecting a matter, require persons to do things respecting a matter or provide a system of licences respecting a matter. The Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards currently has the delegated authority to reduce certain fees for compassionate reasons under Municipal Code, Chapter 442, Fees and Charges, Administration of. Reducing fees is at the discretion of the Executive Director. There are no conditions that must be met, no process to accept requests and no requirements to track and record all waived or reduced fees.

City Council may also adopt a policy that delegates authority to waive or reduce fees. It is the responsibility of staff to implement the decisions of City Council and to establish administrative practices and procedures to carry out those decisions. The intent of the Reduction in Fees Policy for Toronto Animal Services is to have a process that staff can use to implement the delegated authority to reduce or waive fees.

Sections 442-6F and G of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 442, Fees and Charges, Administration of, are then redundant and can be repealed.

The Reduction in Fees Policy for Toronto Animal Services as described in Attachment 1 contains a broader list of fees that can be reduced or waived. It also contains criteria that must be adhered to. The goal of this policy is to ensure that all residents of the city have access to services while providing fairness to taxpayers and contributing to the health and wellness of animals.

Reduced or waived fees will be tracked and reported out during annual operating budget processes.

CONTACT

Kim Smithers
Acting Manager, Toronto Animal Services
Municipal Licensing and Standards
Tel: 416-338-1476
Email: ksmithers@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Tracey Cook, Executive Director
Municipal Licensing and Standards

ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1: Reduction in Fees Policy for Toronto Animal Services

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Policy Statement

The Municipal Licensing and Standards Division strives to be a leader in supporting the City of Toronto as a safe, vibrant, creative and clean community through by-law administration and enforcement serving residents and businesses.

Toronto Animal Services (TAS) promotes and supports the healthy and safe co-existence of people and animals in the City. This is done through education and enforcement of animal related legislation, provision of animal sheltering, adoption, lost pet reunification, licensing, pet sterilization and emergency animal rescue, removal and care.

The goal of this policy is to ensure that all residents of the City of Toronto have access to services while providing fairness to taxpayers and contributing to the health and wellness of animals.

Guiding Principles

Only Toronto City Council has authority to reduce or waive fees or delegate authority to reduce or waive fees.

Fees are determined by the Municipal Licensing and Standards Division and approved by City Council with the intent that fees are reasonable for individuals and offset the costs of specific services that the general tax levy supports.

Fees are not to be reduced or waived unless it is deemed appropriate by the designated authority to reduce or waive fees within the parameters of this policy.

Authority

City Council delegate authority to the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards or designate to reduce or waive fees:

1. If in the opinion of the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards or designate that the number of dogs or cats in TAS shelters is at or near capacity; dogs or cats in TAS shelters do not meet TAS general adoption criteria (for example, the animals have medical or behavioural issues); or it is appropriate to promote dog or cat adoptions; or
2. For financial reasons acceptable to the Executive Director or designate; or
3. For compassionate reasons acceptable to the Executive Director or designate.

Criteria for Financial Reasons:

- must be a resident of the City of Toronto
- must be at least 18 years of age

- must be the owner of the dog or cat
- the dog or cat must be licensed by the City of Toronto in accordance with Municipal Code, Chapter 349, Animals
- family income must be less than the low income cut-off (LICO) threshold as identified by the Canadian federal government
- must demonstrate financial need with appropriate documentation (such as income tax statement or T4 statements)

Criteria for Compassionate Reasons:

- must be a resident of the City of Toronto
- must be at least 18 years of age
- must be the owner of the dog or cat
- the dog or cat must be licensed by the City of Toronto in accordance with Municipal Code, Chapter 349, Animals
- must demonstrate hardship

Eligible Fees

- adoption
- impound
- spay
- neuter
- microchipping
- surrender
- sheltering
- pick up and delivery
- protective care
- cat boxes
- annual dog and cat licence fees

Requests

Requests for reduced or waived fees must be submitted in writing to the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards and demonstrate meeting the criteria for financial reasons or compassionate reasons satisfactory to the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards or designate.

Reporting

Municipal Licensing and Standards staff will track and record all reduced and waived fees and will report annually on the extent of, and the revenue impacts of the reduced and/or waived fees, through the operating budget process.