



The Corporation of the Town of Milton

Report To: Council

From: Meaghen Reid, Director, Legislative & Legal Services/Town Clerk

Date: March 21, 2022

Report No: CORS-019-22

Subject: Oakville Milton Humane Society Wildlife Response and Services

Recommendation: THAT staff be authorized to enter into negotiations with the Oakville Milton Humane Society (OMHS) with respect to a contract for wildlife services.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- There is a public health and safety benefit to the community to have response for requests to service related to sick or injured wildlife in public property.
- Since 2014, the OMHS has provided support to Milton for the humane treatment of sick and injured wildlife without funding from the Town.
- The OMHS has communicated that it has experienced increased costs to provide this service in Milton at no expense to the Town and that OMHS can no longer continue to operate the program in this manner. The OMHS has requested a response from the Town to assess whether the Town is interested in negotiating and formalizing an agreement to provide and fund these services moving forward.
- The purpose of this report is to seek Council direction on this matter, including the potential to enter into negotiations with the OMHS with respect to a contract for wildlife services.

REPORT

Background

The Town enforces the Animal Control By-law to regulate licensing and identification of domestic animals. This includes:

- Investigating by-law infractions
- Patrolling for dogs running at large and leash requirements
- Picking up confined stray cats and dogs or cats and dogs hit by vehicles
- Barking dogs
- Enforcing dog licensing requirements



Background

In 2013, Council received Staff Report ES-002-13 and approved a new service delivery model for animal services response and enforcement. Prior to 2013, Oakville Milton Humane Society (OMHS) provided both domestic and wildlife animal services for the Town of Milton, which included shelter services, enforcement and staffing.

Current Services

Domestic animal-related services:

This existing service delivery model adopted by the Town, starting in 2014, included the hiring of two animal service officer positions and the Town of Milton and partnering with the City of Burlington for shelter services. Shelter services provide a range of domestic animal-related services and promote responsible pet ownership including care, reunion, adoptions, licensing and outreach programs.

Wildlife services:

This shelter agreement with Burlington does not include response to wildlife services, which would be calls about sick or injured wildlife on public property. This would include: raccoons, skunks, squirrels, foxes, birds and other wildlife.

At this time, OMHS provides this service to Milton, at their expense, as the Town does not have the ability or infrastructure to house, humanely rehabilitate wildlife or provide the professional services required for sick or injured wildlife.

Wildlife in Milton

As the urban landscape continues to change, it is necessary to co-exist with wildlife because most residents in Milton will experience encounters with wild animals, especially those who live on or near ravines, near naturalized areas or agricultural zones. Since wild animals are part of our urban landscape, residents are encouraged to learn about the wildlife in their neighbourhood so that sharing space with them is safe and enjoyable.

Healthy wild animals thrive in Halton and should always be left alone. Unless they are sick or injured, wild animals do not require any help or food from people and in fact, intervention by humans is often harmful.

The importance of providing wildlife services to the community is recognized when an animal is reported sick or injured. Sick animals could pose public health and safety concerns and disease prevention must be managed through humane pick up and control of wildlife. There is a benefit to the community to have response for requests to service related to sick or injured wildlife in public property.



Discussion

The OMHS's Animal Protective Services Department had managed the animal control contract for the Town of Milton until that contract was awarded to Burlington Animal Control in 2014. Since 2014, the OMHS has continued to provide support to Milton (at the Society's expense) for the humane treatment of sick and injured wildlife.

The OMHS, through the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (OSPCA), lead all animal abuse and cruelty investigations in Milton until the end of December 2019, at which time the Provincial Animal Welfare Service (PAWS) took responsibility for this service. From June through December 2019, the provincial government provided bridge funding to the OMHS for animal cruelty investigations only. Being a not-for-profit organization, there is not government funding available to OMHS for wildlife services. The 2020 OMHS financial report shows that a large majority of the funding comes from the municipal contract with the Town of Oakville with fundraising, thrift store revenues, community engagement and deferred contributions as sources of income.

During 2019 and 2020, staff had discussions with OMHS staff about wildlife services and lack of funding. In December 2021, staff received the attached letter (in Schedule A to this report) from OMHS communicating that it has seen an increase in calls within the Town of Milton for response to and support for sick, injured and deceased wildlife in your community. This letter has stated that OMHS has experienced increased costs to provide this service in Milton at no expense to the Town and that OMHS can no longer continue to operate this program in this manner. The OMHS has contacted staff to assess whether the Town is interested in negotiating and formalizing an agreement to provide and fund these services. In a subsequent letter (attached as Schedule B to this report), the OMHS indicated that services would be discontinued in Milton should the Town not be interested in exploring opportunities. As these requests were made following the finalization of the 2022 budget, staff have been in further discussions with OMHS throughout 2022 and have been reviewing relevant information regarding wildlife services.

Town staff have confirmed with staff at the City of Burlington, our current provider for shelter services, that they would not be in a position to provide wildlife services to Milton at this time, due to the complexity and technical skill set of this service area. As OMHS is currently providing service to the Town, a funded partnership with OMHS would be consistent with service levels currently being received by residents. OMHS has an established governance and reporting structure in place. OMHS provides animal services to the Town of Oakville.

Staff are seeking direction from Council to enter into negotiations regarding a contract with OMHS for the provision of wildlife services and to discuss funding considerations, anticipated service levels and reporting. Council approval of a negotiated agreement with OMHS will be required prior to execution.



Discussion

In 2022, the staffing and service delivery model of Municipal Law Enforcement Officers (MLEO), Animal Services Officers and Parking Enforcement Officers is being reviewed, which was an identified business case within the Service Delivery Review - Phase 2. Wildlife services and associated contracts would be included as part of this review. As such, any agreement negotiated with the OMHS will consider the timing of this related review.

Financial Impact

According to OMHS, it is estimated that for the 2021 calendar year, that OMHS costs for provision of wildlife services for Milton would be between \$51,000 and \$55,000. This estimate is based on the annual calls and requests for service. The OMHS's cost estimates for provision of service in 2022 is between \$55,000 and \$65,000. These costs will be further assessed and validated through the negotiation process with OMHS.

There is no funding identified in the Town's 2022 approved budget or forecast for the provision of this service. As such, any amount that may be committed to through an agreement would represent an unfavourable variance that requires funding in 2022, and a budget pressure for 2023. The forecasted pressure for 2023, as presented in the 2022 approved budget, amounts to a 7.05% increase on the Town's property taxes. Further financial implications and a funding plan will be provided as part of the future reporting following the negotiation process.

Respectfully submitted,

Troy McHarg
Commissioner, Corporate Services

For questions, please contact: Mary Beth McMullen Phone: Ext. 2133

Attachments

Schedule A: Correspondence from Oakville Milton Humane Society, dated December 9, 2021

Schedule B: Correspondence from Oakville Milton Humane Society, dated February 2, 2022

CAO Approval
Andrew M. Siltala



Chief Administrative Officer

Recognition of Traditional Lands

The Town of Milton resides on the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We also recognize the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat and Haudenosaunee people. The Town of Milton shares this land and the responsibility for the water, food and resources. We stand as allies with the First Nations as stewards of these lands.



December 9, 2021

Marybeth McMullen
Manager, Licensing & Enforcement
Town of Milton
150 Mary Street
Milton, Ontario
L9T 6Z5

Dear Marybeth;

Please find enclosed a report that the Oakville & Milton Humane Society (OMHS) has prepared regarding the provision of wildlife services in Milton. The OMHS has played a vital role with wildlife in your community for many years. As you know, the residents of Milton have historically relied upon our expertise with domestic, exotic and wildlife animals in past and since 2014 with the humane handling and care solely with wildlife.

As indicated in previous conversations with you, the OMHS has seen an increase in calls to our organization from Milton residents asking us to respond to and support sick, injured and deceased wildlife in your community. I have informed you that the OMHS has experienced increased costs to provide this service in Milton and this has happened at no expense to the Town. We can no longer continue to operate this program in this manner. Our Board of Directors has met to discuss this matter and has asked me to provide you with this report outlining the number of animals we've served and the costs to perform this service over the past five years.

I would kindly request that you review the information contained in this report. I would be pleased to hold a videoconference with you to answer any questions you may have. I would also ask for the Town of Milton to indicate to the OMHS if it is interested in negotiating and formalizing an agreement with us to provide and fund these services moving forward. The OMHS would appreciate confirmation of your intent by January 31st, 2022. Timing is important as our Board of Directors intends to decide on the provision of these services at the end of February 2022.

Should you have questions in the meantime, please don't hesitate to contact me at your convenience. I look forward to continuing our conversation on how the OMHS and the Town of Milton can work together to ensure the safety and care of wildlife in the community.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Perciante".

Rick Perciante
Executive Director





February 2, 2022

Marybeth McMullen
Manager, Licensing & Enforcement
Town of Milton
150 Mary Street
Milton, Ontario
L9T 6Z5

Dear Marybeth;

On Monday evening the Oakville & Milton Humane Society's (OMHS) Board of Directors met and had the opportunity to review the Town of Milton's request for an extension regarding our proposal sent to you on December 9, 2021. We understand that broader conversations need to happen within the Town and as such the OMHS will extend the timeline to February 28, 2022. We hope this extension is a signal of your willingness to work with the OMHS to identify a mutually beneficial partnership moving forward.

In fairness to all parties, the Board has asked for a firm indication of intent from the Town of Milton by February 28th to set the stage for appropriate planning by both parties. If the Town is interested in negotiating an agreement and a model of service based on its needs, it is our hope that discussions between both organizations can begin in early March. This will provide us with an opportunity to better understand each others' requirements and confirm the best service model to support wildlife control within Milton. Should the Town not be interested in exploring opportunities with the OMHS, the Society would move to withdraw wildlife services we have been providing by the end of March 2022.

The OMHS and Town of Milton have had a longstanding working relationship for many years. We look forward to hearing from you regarding your intent by the end of February. In the meantime, it may be best to have a phone call in the days ahead to answer any questions you may have.

Thanks again Marybeth for your assistance in this regard.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Perciante".

Rick Perciante
Executive Director

c.c. Clayton Shold- Board Chair, Oakville & Milton Humane Society

