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Item No.
Audit and Finance Standing Committee
April 13, 2016

TO: Chair and Members of Audit and Finance Standing Committee

Original Signed

SUBMITTED BY:

John Traves, Q.C. Acting Chief Administrative Officer

Original Signed

Bob Bjerke, Chief Planner and Director Planning and Development

DATE: March 29, 2016

SUBJECT: Trap Neuter and Release (TNR) Program Funding Request

ORIGIN

August 4, 2015 motion of Regional Council:

MOVED by Councillor Adams, seconded by Councillor Walker,

THAT Halifax Regional Council request a staff report to identify a possible source of funding for a \$50,000 joint grant to the Nova Scotia SPCA and SPAY Day HRM Society to extend the TNR (trap-neuter-release) Program, to be referred to the Audit & Finance Standing Committee.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, section 79

- (1) Council may expend money required by the Municipality for
 - (av) a grant or contribution to
 - (vii) a registered Canadian charitable organization

RECOMMENDATION ON PAGE 2

RECOMMENDATION

1. It is recommended that the Audit and Finance Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council provide one-time funding in 2016-17 by way of a \$50,000 joint grant to the Nova Scotia SPCA and SPAY Day HRM Society to extend the TNR (trap-neuter-release) Program, to be funded from the existing 2016-17 Planning & Development budget, and further direct that the expenditure be managed through cost centre S320 Animal Control, cost element 8004 Grants; and
2. Recommend that Regional Council request a staff report on the feasibility of establishing a permanent grant program for spaying and neutering cats. Furthermore this report is to return to Regional Council in October, 2016.

BACKGROUND

Spay/neutering (SN) cats can help reduce pet overpopulation and improve the quality of the animal's health. Currently in HRM there are numerous agencies that offer low-cost spay and neutering services to low income families and/or students. These agencies include the Metro SPCA, Bide Awhile, Spay Day and various Veterinary Clinics. SN Programs are designed to be offered to people who own their animals opposed to being used for the spaying and neutering of unowned or feral animals.

Trap/Neuter and Return (TNR) programs are defined as programs through which free-roaming, unowned cats are humanely trapped, spayed or neutered, medically treated and subsequently returned to the locations where they were found. These cats are unadoptable and referred to as "feral".

In May 2013, Council provided a one-time grant of \$40,000 to the NSSPCA for infrastructure improvements to its shelter to facilitate a spay/neuter clinic. NSSPCA and Spay Day submitted a letter dated July 29, 2015 proposing to Regional Council a joint venture (see Appendix A) requesting \$50,000 to extend their TNR programs. They estimate with this new funding source 1000 cats could be SN.

At the August 4, 2015 meeting of Regional Council, a motion was passed for staff to assist in the formation of a Domestic and Feral Cat Committee (DFCC) with members from, but not limited to, local veterinarians, the SPCA, Cat Rescue groups, Provincial representatives from the Department of Natural Resources, the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture. This Committee having being formed is to be an advisory body to staff assisting in issues of domestic and feral cats. The first meeting of this committee took place February 17, 2016.

DISCUSSION

It is staff understanding that Council's motion stems from concerns from a cat overpopulation issue in HRM.

Consultation with the Domestic and Feral Cat Committee confirmed there is a cat overpopulation problem, primarily with free roaming cats in urban and suburban Halifax/Dartmouth. Consensus of the DFCC concluded a TNR Program is where the most funding is needed. A second funded program intended to subsidize, at a low cost for residents, a spay or neuter program was seen to be the next most beneficial support to the issue.

Two organizations have collaborated on past spay/neutering initiatives in HRM. These organizations have experiences and resources to manage aspects of the cat overpopulation issue in Halifax/Dartmouth.

Nova Scotia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NSSPCA)

The NSSPCA is a registered Canadian charity and has the following ongoing programs:

- respond to allegations of animal cruelty, neglect and animals in distress throughout NS;
- provide animal husbandry and responsible pet ownership education to owners, schools, workplaces, clubs and other groups;
- arrange shelter, veterinary care and placement services for animals in need; and
- administer an emergency fund for shelter animals in need for extraordinary veterinary intervention

Spay Day HRM Society

The Society is a registered Canadian charity with the following outcomes:

- SN Programs altered 420 cats in 2014;
- rescued and adopted 43 adult cats and 107 kittens;
- provided insulated cat shelters and cat food to several feral cat colonies; and
- held several large trap-neuter-return events (TNR) for feral cats.

Currently, HRM does not have a grant funding program that could accommodate the level and type of funding anticipated by Council's motion. HRM's current Community Grants program provides for project-specific grants in the amount of up to \$5,000 and capital grants in the amount of up to \$25,000. Also, under HRM's current Community Grants program, operating costs are not eligible for funding and therefore any costs associated with utilities, wages, etc., are deemed ineligible. Grants are non-recurring.

Recently, Regional Council has received multiple requests for funding support in amounts that exceed and fall outside the current Community Grants and other program guidelines. As part of the work on the Auditor General's report on Grants and Donations, staff is currently reviewing the overall granting policy. In the interim, the *HRM Charter* permits Regional Council to provide a grant or contribution to a registered Canadian charitable organization: both the NSSPCA and the HRM Spay Day Society fall within that category.

If Council wishes to support the issues of SN and TNR on a regular basis, staff recommends that a grant program be established. This would provide an open and accountable process whereby any registered Canadian charity engaged in this work would have an equal opportunity to access available funding. The program should be set up for a 5-year period, with evaluation of benefit and ongoing need prior to the end of the 5-years.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding for a spay/neuter program has not been allocated in the 2016/17 budget. If Council approves a grant request, funding of \$50,000 could be found within the existing 2016-17 Planning & Development budget. The expenditures would be managed through cost centre S320 Animal Control, cost element 8004 Grants.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Staff has consulted with the Domestic and Feral Cat Committee which is made up of local veterinarians, the NSSPCA, the Shelter Keeper, Conservation group, Cat Rescue groups, and Provincial representatives from the Department of Natural Resources.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental implications.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Regional Council not approve the one time joint grant to the Nova Scotia SPCA and SPAY DAY HRM Society.
2. Regional Council could not request staff look at the feasibility of establishing a permanent grant program to provide funding to charitable organizations for the purpose of spay and neutering cats.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A NSSPCA and Spay Day letter, dated July 29, 2015

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/index.php> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

Report Prepared by: Andrea MacDonald, Manager License Standards, 902.490.7371

Original Signed

Report Approved by:


Jim Dohovan, Manager Municipal Compliance, 902.476.8211

APPENDIX A



July 29th, 2015

Motion to HRM Council

Background of Participating Organizations

Nova Scotia SPCA Spay/Neuter Clinic:

Since opening in May of 2013, the Provincial Animal Shelter and Veterinary Clinic has spayed or neutered over 6000 animals. The clinic is open to other SPCA Branches, low income individuals and families, as well as local animal rescue and TNR groups. The goal of the clinic is to provide affordable veterinary care to those animals most at risk and to focus on targeted Spay/Neuter initiatives that are aimed at decreasing the cat population within HRM.

Spay Day HRM Society:

The Spay Day HRM program was started in 2011 in response to the undisputed growing cat population of HRM and the number of cats in need. Their goal is to target those cats most at risk of not receiving access to veterinary care or being spayed or neutered. They include low income individuals and families as well as stray, abandoned and feral cats. Spay Day focuses on areas around public housing and some of the most economically challenged neighbourhoods throughout the city. To date Spay Day HRM has spayed and neutered 1300 cats, the majority altered at the SPCA's Spay/Neuter Clinic. Spay Day HRM is a registered charity operating throughout the city.

The Dilemma

In order to make impactful change, 80% of breeding aged animals need to be altered in order to see a reduction in the number of animals needing shelter or rescue. The Nova Scotia SPCA is dedicated to the support of TNR projects as overpopulation directly affects the cycle of neglect, abuse and cruelty.

Spay Day HRM and the Nova Scotia SPCA have already partnered on multiple successful projects in regards to the cat overpopulation crisis. Spay Day HRM also uses the SPCA's high volume Spay/Neuter Clinic on a weekly basis and is familiar with the clinic's protocols in regards to TNR.

What is not in dispute is that the cat population throughout HRM is at crisis levels and there are thousands of free roaming cats reproducing, continually adding to the problem. Animal

shelters, cat rescue and TNR (trap-neuter-return) organizations throughout the city are without enough funds and resources to address this ever growing problem.

Where aggressive, targeted TNR initiatives have been introduced, there is a visible reduction in the cat population proving the effectiveness of this method of humanely controlling the cat population.

Local animal welfare organizations, including Spay Day HRM and the Nova Scotia SPCA are waiting for the formation of a Domestic Pet Advisory Committee which is currently delayed pending a study by HRM staff. A Domestic Animal Advisory committee will be advantageous in that it will bring animal care/rescue experts to the table with HRM staff and Council to discuss viable, affordable, effective solutions to issues related to domestic animals.

The committee volunteers will be able to share expertise, brainstorm new ideas, form collaborative partnerships and increase understanding, thereby saving the city money, increasing efficiency and reducing the number of unwanted cats roaming throughout HRM.

MOTION for HRM Council

Due to the delay in forming an HRM Advisory Committee, it is proposed that the City of Halifax extend a \$50,000 grant to Spay Day HRM and the Nova Scotia SPCA's Spay/Neuter Clinic to provide funding for a trap-neuter-return (TNR) program for free roaming cats in HRM.

It is recommended the grant be administered jointly by the Nova Scotia SPCA and the Spay Day HRM Society. Both organizations are registered charities, have collaborated on past Spay/Neuter initiatives and have the experience and resources to manage all aspects of a project of this size with a thorough understanding of the issues.

The funds from this grant would allow for 2 full surgery days per month for a period of one year that will spay or neuter 1000 cats. The coordination of surgical time, supplies, transportation and volunteer engagement will be organized through the Nova Scotia SPCA and Spay Day HRM.