

HALIFAX

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Item No. 15.1.3
Halifax Regional Council
October 25, 2022

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

Original Signed by 

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: October 19, 2022

SUBJECT: Request for Funding the Nova Scotia Society for the Prevention of the Cruelty to Animals (NSSPCA) Trap, Neuter, Return Program

ORIGIN

On May 17, 2022, the following motion of Regional Council was put and passed:

“THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to provide a staff report and recommendations with respect to continued funding for the SPCA’s Trap, Neuter, Release program for feral cats for another five years.”

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

HRM Charter, S.N.S 2008, c.39

Section 79A (1) Subject to subsections (2) to (4), the Municipality may only spend money for municipal Purposes if

(a) the expenditure is included in the Municipality’s operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the Municipality;

...

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to negotiate and enter into a Contribution Agreement with the Nova Scotia SPCA in accordance with the key terms described in the discussion section of this report, to provide funding of up to \$25,000 annually for five years (subject to annual budget considerations), to assist with the Nova Scotia SPCA’s Trap Neuter Return (TNR) program.

BACKGROUND

Spaying or neutering (SN) cats can help to 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 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 spay and neutering of unowned or feral animals.

Trap, Neuter, Return (TNR) programs apply to situations where 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".

On April 15, 2016, Regional Council approved a one-time funding by way of a \$50,000 joint grant to the Nova Scotia SPCA and Spay Day HRM Society to extend the TNR program.

On September 19, 2017, Regional Council approved a contribution agreement to provide funding of up to \$50,000 annually for five years to the Nova Scotia SPCA and Spay Day HRM Society for the TNR program.

From 2016 - 2022, HRM provided Nova Scotia SPCA and Spay Day HRM Society a total of \$225,000. During this time, nearly 3,100 cats were treated through the TNR program. The intake of stray cats at the SPCA during this same time has declined by 54%.

DISCUSSION

The Nova Scotia SPCA is prepared to solely partner with the Municipality for 2022 – 2027 on the TNR Program. For an investment of \$25,000 annually, the SPCA will work to help prevent feral colonies from forming and growing by spaying and neutering strays, community cats and animals at risk of becoming unhoused.

Nova Scotia SPCA's projections and budget for 2022 – 2027 are based on treating 300 cats/year at a cost of \$77,000. The break down included in their proposal, attached as Attachment A is as follows:

Table #1- NSSPCA Projections and Budget

Annual Expenses for Halifax TNR Program	
Rent (triage and recovery space)	\$17,000
Animal Care (food and supplies)	\$5,000
Veterinary Costs (surgical supplies, medical care)	\$30,000
Promotion and Education	\$10,000
Staffing (Coordinator, care and feeding)	\$15,000
Total	\$77,000

Annual Revenue for Halifax TNR Program	
HRM Grant	\$25,000
Anonymous donor (TNR)	\$35,000
SPCA contribution	\$17,000
Total	\$77,000

Contribution Agreement

As per the previous Contribution Agreement, staff are recommending the \$25,000 contribution apply to costs specific to the medical expenses covering the cost of the spaying and neutering of the cats.

The funds are not to be used for any expenditures that are unrelated to the medical costs for the TNR program nor towards the treatment of cats originating outside the boundary of the municipality or temporarily transported to the municipality. Additional Key Terms and Conditions are included in Table #2:

Table #2 – Proposed Contribution Agreement – Key Terms and Conditions

The NSSPCA shall use the grant provided by HRM solely for the TNR Program
Payment by HRM in the amount of \$125,000 shall represent the complete financial commitment from HRM. There shall be no supplemental or incremental funds available to NSSPCA. The funds will be dispersed through a payment schedule whereby an initial payment of \$25,000 is made in March 31/2023 with subsequent annual payments, subject to budget approval, payable at the end of each fiscal year, ending March 31/27.
HRM shall not be a guarantor of the NSSPCA TNR, nor shall there be any contingent or direct liability either implied or expressed.
In return for HRM's financial contribution, NSSPCA shall provide recognition commensurate with the level of investment.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding for a TNR program has been included in the 2022-23 budget under cost centre S420 (By-law Standards) therefore, should Regional Council approve the recommendation for the TNR program, there will be no impact on the 2022-23 budget. Amounts for subsequent years will be proposed for inclusion in future operating budgets.

The 5- year estimated financial implications are summarized as follows:

Fiscal Year	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Operating – Cost Centre S420	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are no significant risks associated with this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Staff have engaged with the Domestic and Feral Cat Committee which identified a need for funding to assist with a TNR Program. The Committee is made up of local veterinarians, the NSSPCA, the NS Medical Veterinary Association, Conservation group, Cat Rescue groups, and Provincial representatives from the Department of Natural Resources. Spay Day has provided a Letter of Support, attached as Attachment B.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The TNR program may help to reduce the cat population thereby having a positive impact on the birds and other wildlife that are vulnerable to injury and death by cats.

ALTERNATIVES

Regional Council may decide not to approve the recommendation for funding of \$25,000 annually to the Nova Scotia SPCA's TNR program for feral cats. This alternative is not recommended.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Trap Neuter Return Proposal 2022-2027
Attachment B: Letter of Support Spay Day Society

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Andrea MacDonald, Acting Director Compliance, 902.490.7371

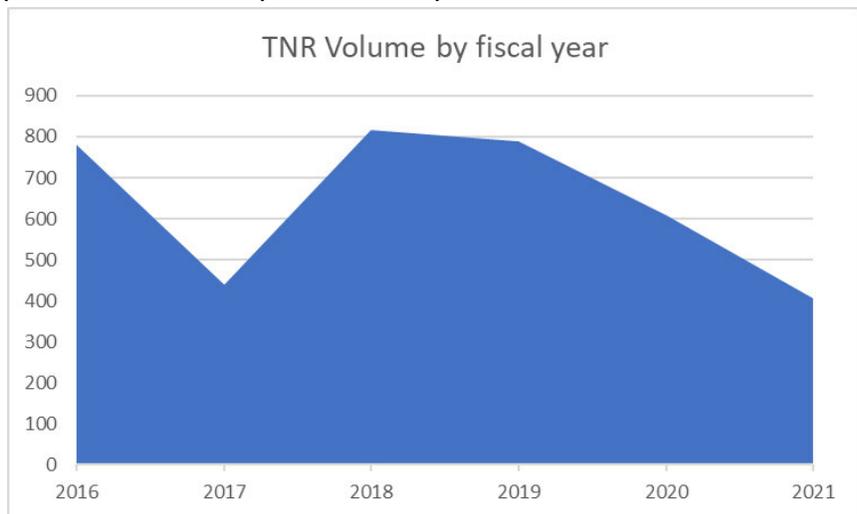
Trap Neuter Return Proposal: 2022 to 2027

Partnership between Municipality of Halifax and the Nova Scotia SPCA

Halifax has been recognized as a North American Leader in Humane Cat Population Control through their work in Trap Neuter Return.

The Nova Scotia SPCA is prepared to partner with the municipality on Trap Neuter Return. For an investment of \$25,000k annually the SPCA will work to prevent feral colonies from forming and growing by providing spay and neuter to strays, community cats and animals at risk of becoming unhoused.

It is nearly impossible to know how many feral and free roaming cats there are in HRM. Estimates vary wildly but in Halifax we see a steady decline of requests to address cat colonies. Our humane population control programs are having a positive impact.



The municipality is in a good position, but a single pregnant cat can create a colony as large as 53 within 16 months. In Halifax the limits of food and shelter tend to keep our colonies around 30 animals.

The program we created in partnership with Spay Day Halifax Society and HRM has been effective. We get calls across the country asking about our program and seeking advice. Failure to continue the program could mean returning to a city where council addresses cat issues at nearly every meeting, cats suffer, cat colony caretakers have no where to turn for help and the community has no one to address their concerns.

Is Halifax's cat problem solved? No. But we have made incredible progress and recognize that ongoing maintenance is needed to hold the line.

Request

Halifax invest \$25,000/year for 5 years in SPCA strategies to reduce the population of outdoor cats. The grant would support constituents finding the services available and spay and neuter of community cats, or cats at risk of becoming community cats.

Annual Expenses for Halifax TNR Program	
Rent (Triage and recovery space)	\$ 17,000
Animal care (Food and supplies)	\$ 5,000
Veterinary costs (surgical supplies, medical care)	\$ 30,000
Promotion and education	\$ 10,000
Staffing (Coordinator, care and feeding)	\$ 15,000
Total	\$ 77,000

Program Description

The Nova Scotia SPCA would be the hub for Halifax residents with concerns about cat colonies. By email, web and phone they would

Annual Revenue for Halifax TNR Program	
HRM Grant	\$ 25,000
Anonymous donor (TNR)	\$ 35,000
SPCA contribution	\$ 17,000
Total	\$ 77,000

be directed to available programs. Strays and smaller groups of cats would be trapped by property owners using borrowed SPCA equipment, while SPCA trained volunteers would be available for situations where residents weren't able to manage. The SPCA would triage cats and provide for surgery and recovery.

Our projections and budget are based on treating 300 cats/year at a cost of \$77,000. An anonymous donor has agreed to fund the medical care, food and supplies for the program.

The number of colony animals to be addressed would continue to decline and surgical capacity would be available for animals at risk of becoming stray and community cats.

Outcomes

We anticipate the municipality's investment in the trap-neuter-return program will have the following benefits:

- Constituents have one contact to address concerns with cat colonies and stray animals.
- Colony caretakers can get help.
- The population of community cats maintains and may continue to decline.
- Animals in the municipality will be healthier.
- Council will spend less time discussing community cats.
- The municipality will earn points towards certification as a Bird Friendly City by Nature Canada.



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Linda M. Felix, President (902) 877-1578 cell

[Spay Day HRM is a registered charity](#)

www.spaydaynovascotia.wordpress.com

April 6, 2022

Halifax City Council
Halifax, N.S.

Dear Sir/Madame,

The TNR program that completed on March 31st was specially designed to address the high volume of feral cats identified in HRM. Through this unique partnership we were able to address all the barriers that contributed to the high volume TNR of feral cats. Finding a readily accessible veterinary clinic that is willing and able to handle feral cats, having a space to hold the cat for the clinic appointment and some surgical recovery time when needed are some of the challenges when conducting feral TNR. Through the partnership, we were able to add in the bonus of relocating cats to barn homes when required, evaluating the cats for socialization and adoptability, socializing feral kittens for adoption and more. We started with a one year pilot project and then a 5 year funded contract/program. As the 5 year contract and partnership completed, we are pleased to say this program has had a substantial positive effect on the free roaming cat population of our city. Over the course of the project we addressed over 2500 cats from all areas of HRM and as a result there are fewer cats living outside and reproducing in our city.

The City of Halifax made a bold decision to humanely address the feral cat issues by providing funding and entering into this exciting partnership initiative. You can now tell other municipalities of your great success on how to deal with their cat populations without the mass killing of cats and public controversy by simply spaying and neutering. City Councillors are not undulated with citizen complaints about cats as were your predecessors prior to the TNR project. The NS SPCA provided solid leadership and veterinary services. We are proud to have been part of this unique and successful partnership. By working together we achieved more than ever thought possible.

The cat population of HRM may not currently be in a crisis situation but it won't take long to return to being a mess. While you may feel you don't have a cat problem, you do have a people problem. Unemployment due to covid, homelessness due to the high costs of housing, areas of social housing, the exodus of students at the end of the school year, sadly all contribute to cat abandonment. Abandoned cats who reproduce at will outside create feral cats and the cycle begins again.

We strongly encourage the City of Halifax to provide funding for a TNR maintenance program so that the results of six years of work can be maintained and not revert back to a nuisance feline population as in past years.

Regards



Linda Felix, President
Spay Day HRM