

Animal Control By-law Review Working Group Minutes
Tuesday 11 April 2017 at 4:30p.m, Falstaff Room

Present: Ken Wood, Sharon Morrice, Maxine Watson, Pamela Bartlett, Gail Blanchard-Arsenault, Kimberly Kempen, Ed Dujlovic, Stephanie Potter

Regrets: Christopher Koslowski

Delegations: Donna Taylor, Director of Health Protection, Perth District Health Unit;
Grace Kant, Stratford Dog Park Association

1.0 Review minutes of previous meetings

The committee will review and approve minutes from 28 February 2017 and (revised) 17 January 2017 at a future meeting.

2.0 Backyard chickens – Delegation: Donna Taylor, Director of Health Protection, Perth District Health Unit

- In response to working group questions regarding the potential public health risks associated with keeping urban chickens, Donna Taylor provided the following information:
 - In 2016, the Perth District Health Unit had 64 reported cases of salmonella related illnesses; 23.4% were related to poultry farming/processing, or consumption of raw or undercooked chicken or eggs;
 - While there are benefits to keeping urban chickens (i.e. – sustainable locally raised food source/food security), raising chickens does present a risk of contracting salmonella and avian flu. Chickens also carry mites and other diseases;
 - Even healthy birds present a risk of disease (salmonella is present in their feces);
 - The elderly and young children are at greatest risk of illness;
 - It was noted that a strong education program would be required if Stratford decided to allow backyard chickens, including information on hygiene and risk mitigation (e.g. – must wear a mask while cleaning the coop; shoes worn in the coop should not come into the house, etc);
 - It was noted that chickens and chicken feed can attract predators, and that there is the potential for bacterial run-off into neighboring properties;
 - It was noted that chickens do not carry rabies, as they are cold-blooded;
 - The Municipality of Perth East consulted the Perth District Health Unit in 2012 when they considered allowing urban chickens. Perth East decided not to allow backyard chickens.

- Ms. Taylor noted that the Health Unit supports the keeping of urban chickens if risks are understood and mitigated and the animals are properly cared for. Thus the City will need to decide if this is a risk that they want to take. If the City decides to proceed, the Health Unit will prepare some information for an education program.
 - The working group voiced concerns that some residents interested in raising chickens may not be prepared for the amount of work/upkeep that chickens require, the substantial cost of keeping them (approximately \$500 to \$1200 to install a proper coop plus food/care), or realize what is required to properly care for them (e.g. – veterinary care, omnivorous diet, and coop maintenance/cleaning and climate control).
 - Therefore, a strong education component would be necessary if Stratford decides to allow people to raise urban chickens. This program should include information on how to properly care for chickens, the cost of raising them, and the precautions that need to be taken when handling/caring for them, for example:
 - Handwashing
 - Hygiene/sanitation/cleaning
 - Must wear a mask when cleaning the chicken coop
 - Do not bring shoes in the house after walking through the chicken coop
 - Cleaning materials must be kept outside
 - Keeping chickens out of contact with wild birds
 - Proper storage of feed
 - Reporting illnesses
 - Animal welfare, including proper veterinary care, climate control, and dietary needs
 - Set expectations regarding the amount of work involved with raising chickens
 - Minimum property setbacks would also be required, along with a minimum square footage of space for each bird, and a limiting the number of chickens allowed per property
 - It was noted that urban chickens would be hens, not roosters (ie – no crowing/limited noise)
 - Some working group members advocated the adoption guidelines similar to City of Kingston's, which require residents applying for a license to keep backyard chickens to advise their neighbors; if complaints are received, they are considered by council
 - Models such as "Rent the Chicken" were discussed, which cost \$500 to \$600 for a May to October rental
 - It was also noted that at present, the City allows backyard pigeons
 - Concerns were also raised over enforcement
- ⇒ The working group elected to defer a decision on recommending backyard chickens until the results of the public survey are received.

3.0 Stratford Dog Park – Delegation: Grace Kant, Stratford Dog Park Association

- Grace Kant was invited to the meeting to speak to issues around limiting the number of dogs in the Stratford off-leash dog park; issues with dogs running at large in other Stratford parks, and whether there is a need for another off-leash dog park in Stratford. Ms. Kant summarized the Stratford Dog Park Association's position on these issues as follows:
 - The Stratford Dog Park has 110 members and sees over 1000 visitors per year, including guests from neighboring municipalities (i.e. – New Hamburg, Goderich) and even some guests from the United States;
 - The City owns the land, the Dog Park Association owns the fencing and looks after the insurance requirements;
 - The Dog Park Association would like a bylaw to govern the code of conduct/terms of use in the Dog Park;
 - The Stratford Dog Park Association supports limiting the number of dogs allowed per person at the Stratford Dog Park, and wrote a letter to the City expressing this position in May 2015. Some patrons bring 4-5 dogs at once and it can become dangerous and lead to injuries;
 - The Dog Park Association recommends a bylaw be passed for the dog park that states there is a maximum of 3 dogs per responsible adult in the off-leash park, and that patrons must have control of their dogs at all times;
 - It was reported that the separate section now set up for small dogs is very successful at mitigating the risk of injuries;
 - While the park is heavily used in summer and fall, it is too muddy for heavy use in spring. There are some drainage issues in the dog park that need to be addressed because the park is too muddy in the spring and it keeps people from using the park – many will take their dogs elsewhere and some allow them off-leash elsewhere. The Dog park association is currently using mulch to help absorb the mud;
 - It was stated that Stratford does not need another dog park, we should focus on improving the one we have, drainage is the real issue; a second dog park would only be beneficial if it were centrally located and people could walk to it. Fixing the drainage problems will help keep people from walking their dogs off-leash in cemeteries, sports fields, and regular parks;
 - It was noted that it is difficult to enforce rules in a dog park; a bylaw limiting numbers and the ability to impose fines would be helpful; similarly, fines should be imposed for dogs walking off-leash in other city parks/sports fields (etc).

- Working group members cited the need for public education on responsible dog park etiquette (paper or website driven; signage that includes the text of the proposed bylaw and information on fines that could be imposed)
 - It was stated that the Humane Society has some material available that can be used for education
 - It was suggested that the City may need more bylaw enforcement officers or if current officers could do a blitz of the dog park as part of enforcement
 - It was noted that the Dog Park Association provides some education but there are always challenges/bad apples – most of the patrons are fantastic
 - It was noted that the larger the dog pack, the more aggressive they can be. The working group discussed limiting the number of dogs to two or three per responsible adult; concluding that the number of dogs should match the number of available hands, therefore a maximum of two dogs should be allowed per person.
- ⇒ **The Animal Control Working Group Recommends that the consolidated City of Stratford Animal Control Bylaw limit the number of dogs allowed at the Stratford Dog park to a maximum of two dogs per responsible adult.**
- ⇒ **Action Item:** That Staff work to find drainage solutions for the Stratford Dog Park.

4.0 Cats at Large – Letter

- Councilor Kathy Vassilakos received a letter regarding cats roaming at large that was referred to the Animal Control Working Group;
- Working Group members suggested that those with issues of cats roaming at large on their property contact Feline Friends to purchase a Cat Stop – a motion activated device that sprays water;
- It was recommended that the cats roaming at large issue be considered as part of enforcement and education – indoor cats live longer and happier lives.

5.0 Draft Survey

- The working group reviewed the draft public survey and made a few small revisions;
- These revisions will be incorporate into a new draft that will be circulated to the working group for further comment prior to distribution.

6.0 Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 6:47pm.