

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, April 16, 2024

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: LICENSING OF WILDLIFE REMOVAL COMPANIES

FROM:

Gus Michaels, Deputy City Manager, Community Services

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

In response to instances of improper wildlife containment and removal practices which cause distress, injury or death to animals, staff seek to develop regulations for companies offering wildlife removal services in the City of Vaughan through the development of a new business licensing category. The new enforcement tools will ensure wildlife removal companies operate in a manner that minimizes the risk of harm or death to wildlife and implements consumer protection measures for the public.

Report Highlights

- Day-to-day operations of wildlife removal companies are largely unregulated.
- Animal Services has responded to complaints of wildlife removal companies using removal techniques that compromise the wellbeing of animals and put the public at risk.
- To minimize harm to animals and the public, staff are recommending that wildlife removal companies be required to obtain a business licence to operate in the City of Vaughan.
- If approved, Vaughan will be the first municipality in Ontario to regulate Wildlife Removal Companies.

Recommendations

1. THAT the Business Licensing By-law 122-2022, as amended, be further amended, as generally set out in Attachment 1 to this report, and in a form satisfactory to Legal Services, to create licensing provisions for wildlife removal companies; and

2. THAT the Fees and Charges By-law 224-2023, as amended, be further amended, as generally set out in Attachment 2 to this report, in a form satisfactory to Legal Services, to create a wildlife removal company licensing fee and wildlife removal company vehicle licensing placard fee.

Background

To address nuisance caused by wildlife on their properties, or intrusion within, property owners will seek the services of wildlife removal companies, which is a largely unregulated industry in Ontario. Complaints have been received by the Animal Services division of By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services that wildlife removal companies are not consistently carrying out the capture and relocation of animals in an ethical or humane manner. Although the Animal Control By-law sets forth broad requirements for the expected treatment of wildlife by all persons, it does not specifically regulate the activities of wildlife removal companies.

Previous Reports/Authority

[City of Vaughan Animal Control By-law 066-2020](#)

Analysis and Options

Wildlife removal companies remove wildlife from residential and commercial properties. Most frequently, the wildlife removed include squirrels, racoons, skunks, and other small mammals. More than a dozen wildlife removal companies advertise as being Vaughan-based and are presently operating in the City of Vaughan. It is highly probable that many more companies located/based outside of Vaughan's municipal boundaries travel to Vaughan to offer services.

Although some activities of wildlife removal companies are governed in part by various provincial and federal acts and regulations, there is very little day-to-day supervision of these companies. Due to the lack of oversight of and regulations for wildlife removal companies, inhumane practices have been reported to and observed by Animal Services. Examples include young being needlessly separated from their mother, inhumane trapping, animals being confined without the necessities of life, inhumane euthanasia techniques, and improper relocation and disposal of remains.

Jurisdictional Scan

After completing a comprehensive jurisdictional scan, staff were unable to find any municipalities in Ontario who regulate wildlife removal companies, and only British Columbia specifically licenses wildlife removal companies at a provincial level. By proceeding with and introducing regulations through a business licensing framework as recommended within this staff report, the City will be setting a significant precedent in the care and control of wildlife by ensuring companies that offer and provide removal of

wildlife services do so in a humane and ethical manner, while establishing regulations to support consumer protection.

Industry Consultation

Email correspondence was sent to 24 wildlife removal companies that advertise they are Vaughan-based or provide services within the City, asking for feedback and providing an opportunity to speak with staff. One company responded with feedback, indicating their support for the new regulations.

Proposed Regulations

The proposed regulations include those which are standard for all business licence applications and the regulations for other contractor-type businesses operating in Vaughan, including insurance, vehicle signage, and staff identification requirements. Additional provisions have been developed specific to wildlife removal companies that function to ensure the safe and humane treatment of wildlife and greater consumer protection.

Criminal Record Check

All owners, operators and employees of wildlife removal companies will be required to submit a Criminal Record Check, from an Ontario Police Service, which meets the standard provisions under the licensing by-law and, in addition, must indicate that there have been no convictions under Sections 445, 446, and/or 447 of the Criminal Code of Canada, which are specific to animal cruelty and neglect.

Vehicles

Vehicles used by wildlife removal companies will be required to adhere to certain standards to ensure the safe and humane transportation of animals. In addition to being equipped with working and adequate temperature control measures to prevent distress to wildlife being contained, all vehicles must be equipped with adequate measures to contain and segregate wildlife from coming in to contact with any other animal or human occupant of the vehicle, and all animals must be securely contained within a primary enclosure within the vehicle.

Contracts

As a consumer protection measure, wildlife removal companies will be required to provide a written contract to their customers, specifying the work that will be performed and the payment schedule, prior to accepting any payments or commencing any work.

Bite Reporting Requirements

To limit the spread of zoonotic disease, wildlife removal companies will be required to report all bites or injuries to a person that result in breakage of skin to local public health unit and Vaughan Animal Services within 24 hours. Similarly, all bites on injuries caused

to a domestic animal by wildlife must be reported to Vaughan Animal Services within 24 hours.

Release Requirements

To ensure a reasonable chance of reunification and reintegration within their natural habitat, wildlife removal companies must release an animal no more than 1 kilometer away from the capture location. Further, any animals that cannot be released back in to the wild shall only be released to a Province of Ontario authorized wildlife rehabilitator or Vaughan Animal Services.

Policies and Procedures

To mitigate transmission of zoonotic diseases, such as rabies, and to ensure ethical and humane methods are used in the care and control of animals, it is critical that wildlife removal companies have standardized policies and procedures in place. Companies will be required to submit copies of their policies and procedures for cleaning and disinfection of vehicles and supplies, handling of injured and diseased animals, bites, and personal protective equipment requirements for staff.

Trap Requirements

The new regulations will prevent wildlife removal companies from using certain types of traps that are known to cause unnecessary and indiscriminate distress to animals, including the use of noxious and poisonous chemicals. Moreover, the by-law will stipulate time intervals at which companies will be required to check traps for captured animals, and for their release.

Log and Record Keeping Requirements

Wildlife Removal Company owners will be required to maintain logs pertaining to each wildlife capture and/or removal for a minimum of 1 year, which include information about the capture and and/or removal, such as the date, time and location, species and gender information, condition of the animal, removal of any habitats, and outcome.

Compliance with Other Legislation

To maintain their City of Vaughan business licence, companies will be required to remain in compliance with various pieces of legislation at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels that govern wildlife removal practices in part or any other applicable law.

Financial Impact

Wildlife removal companies will be subject to the same licensing fee that is collected for other contractor-type businesses. It is anticipated that this fee will be sufficient to recover costs associated with the administration and enforcement of this licensing category.

Operational Impact

It is anticipated that any operational impacts resulting from the implementation of this licensing category will be absorbed by the current staff complement.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

There are no municipalities in Ontario known to licence wildlife removal companies. The passage of this new licensing category sets a precedent for municipal standards for these companies.

Staff consulted with stakeholders at animal welfare agencies that work alongside the City, and all expressed their enthusiasm for this new licensing category.

Conclusion

Urban expansion and changing natural habitats are displacing wildlife in our community, creating an urgent need to implement effective measures to ensure they are protected. By licensing wildlife removal companies, the City will not only engage in critical wildlife protection efforts, but will also create additional consumer protection measures for residents who hire wildlife removal companies, and health and safety precautions for the general public. As Vaughan will be the first municipality to create a licensing category for wildlife removal companies in Ontario, staff are hoping that other municipalities will follow suit and make clear that any company interacting with animals on behalf of residents must ensure that the health and safety of both animals and humans remains their top priority.

For more information, please contact: Susan Kelly, Director and Chief Licensing Officer, By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services, ext. 8952.

Attachments

1. Proposed Wildlife Removal Company Licensing By-law Amendments.
2. Proposed Wildlife Removal Company Fees and Charges By-law Amendments.

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