



Electronic Animal Care Committee

**May 19, 2021
ZOOM
5:30 PM – 7:30 PM**

Members Present

Valerie Burke, Vice-Chair
Aviva Harari
Bernice Royce
Janet Andrews
Judy Postello
June Ziola
Vikrum Pain
Areez Remtulla
Dr. Esther Attard
Sherry Klein

Regrets

Denielle Duncan, Chair

Guests

Animal Care Officers: Adam Freeman and Terry Zelinski

Staff

Christy Lehman, Animal Care Supervisor
John Britto, Committee Secretary (PT)

Item	Discussion	Action
1. Call to Order	The Animal Care Committee convened at 5:30 PM with Valerie Burke in the Chair.	
2. Approval of the April 21, 2021 Animal Care Committee Meeting Minutes	<p>Moved by Bernice Royce Seconded by Aviva Harari</p> <p>That the minutes of the April 21, 2021 Animal Care Committee meeting be approved, as presented.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Carried</p>	
3. Business Arising from the Minutes	Committee reviewed the list of action items and updated the Action Item Table (view last page of the minute's document for details).	

a. Update on revising inconsistencies on website re animal licensing and ACC description

Valerie Burke, Vice Chair thanked June Ziola for revising the inconsistencies on the City's website with respect to animal licensing and the description and role of the Animal Care Committee.

Valerie suggested a sub-committee of two or three members to review the Committee's description, circulate it online for comments from the members, and report back at the September meeting.

June Ziola referred to an email from Aviva Harari about donations made during the online pet licensing process that do not transfer to the Committee. She referred to the donations she made before she became a member of the Committee, and now realized that those donations did not actually transfer to the Committee. She agreed with Aviva that this option should not be included on the online pet licensing page. She further advised that this option is not available when licensing is done in-person at City Hall.

Valerie Burke, Vice Chair suggested that there should be some description of the ACC on the website.

Responding to a question, Christy Lehman, Animal Services Supervisor confirmed that donations made during the online pet licensing process go to the City's Animal Services account of the City's Animal Services department.

Christy further advised that the online pet licensing page has been updated through Corporate Communications. Updating the Committee's description page, which is through a portal application system, is a more complicated process and needs to be done with help from IT Services.

	<p>Aviva expressed concerns about the language contained in the online pet licensing page with respect to donations that don't actually come to the Committee, which can be construed as a misrepresentation to those making donations, as they may think their donations are going to the volunteer Animal Care Committee. As a taxpayer, she is not sure why she is donating money to the City of Markham to run animal services. Those funds should be part of property taxes. She further stated that dog licensing fees have increased from the previous \$10 for a microchipped dog to the current \$30. From a citizen's perspective, it does not seem proper to ask for donations over and above taxes. Aviva is of the opinion that this component of the online pet licensing should be deleted, if the City is asking for donations to run animal services, and the donations do not go to the Animal Care Committee.</p> <p>Valerie advised that many years ago Markham's Animal Care Committee had discussed emulating the City of Calgary and how they sustained their animal services and their shelter through licensing fees.</p> <p>Christy advised that the City of Markham is nowhere close to recovering costs through licensing fees, however, the financial situation is slowly improving with in-house officers. Christy stated that an estimated 80% of the 290,000 households in the City have a pet animal, however, only 8,000 have been licensed. She further advised that there are other services, other than pet ownership, and wildlife services that make up a large portion of the Animal Care Officers' duties, which are not cost-recovered.</p> <p>Christy advised that the fundraising and donation component was introduced when the City was fundraising for a Cat Adoption and Education Centre. She further advised that there are other areas of the City that seek donations, and it was only a business decision to offset the costs of some services. She supported the deletion of the section</p>	
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	<p>about the ACC from the online pet licensing page. She advised that she is in the process of doing this, however; it will take some time.</p> <p>Dr. Esther Attard advised that cost-recovery for animal services through pet licensing does not work. Many municipalities try to emulate the City of Calgary, but that is just not feasible the way Calgary does it, because they have done something that no other municipality can replicate to get to where they are. Dr. Attard further suggested that if donations are collected through pet licensing, there has to be separate programming that should be done through those donations, e.g., veterinary care, spay-and-neuter, etc. These donations should not be utilized for regular animal services, which should be provided for through taxes.</p> <p>Valerie indicated that people are more likely to donate if they know what their donations are being utilized for, rather than City-provided general animal services.</p> <p>Aviva advised that considering City Hall is not accessible due to the ongoing pandemic closures, many of her neighbours have had trouble licensing their dogs because of online licensing issues.</p> <p>Valerie appreciated the work of Judy Postello, Treasurer of the Committee, and suggested that a review of the Committee's financials be conducted at the September meeting.</p> <p>b. General update regarding additional information Responding to information on the City's website regarding live trapping and relocating wildlife, Christy Lehman, Animal Care Supervisor, agreed to delete this information first thing next morning.</p> <p>Christy advised that the Ministry of National Resources and Forests (MNRF) has delegated authority to municipalities under the <i>Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act</i>, to deal</p>	<p>Mary-Jane Courchesne to include in Sept. ACC agenda.</p> <p>Christy to delete information from website.</p>
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	<p>with wildlife, according to which wildlife cannot be relocated to outside of a kilometre from where they were originally found. She further advised that she will be presenting to the May 31st General Committee on coyote concerns raised by residents in the following four known active coyote locations: (1) Thornhill, (2) Swan Lake, (3) Markham District High School around Church Street, and (4) Alfred Patterson Park / 16th Avenue.</p> <p>Christy further advised that she will also be presenting on the municipality's legislative authority. Coyote Watch Canada and the MNRF will also be presenting at the same meeting. She further advised that Animal Care Officers have investigated and reported multiple instances of By-law infractions relating to responsible pet ownership and feeding of wildlife.</p> <p>Christy advised that she is proposing stricter enforcement and zero-tolerance for people feeding wildlife, people with dogs on leashes longer than two metres, etc. It is proposed to increase education on wildlife related matters through social media channels, and tickets will be issued for non-compliance.</p> <p>Christy further advised that Animal Care Officers have reported that a majority of the residents are aware of the coyote existence in the areas, and how to behave around them and/or how to manage coyote encounters. It is only a few individuals who are concerned and raising issues about coyotes in the community.</p> <p>Christy advised that she is not aware of any place in the GTHA where coyotes have been relocated from their natural habitat. This is not something that should be done, based on threats that do not exist. It is human behaviour that is causing these issues and that's what the focus should be directed to.</p> <p>Christy advised that the General Committee, which is a public forum, will be meeting at 9:30 a.m. on Monday, May 31st, and she</p>	
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	<p>encouraged Committee members to attend, make a deputation, submit a written communication or make a motion based on the information she shared on the matter. She further advised that Councillors value the Animal Care Committee very highly, especially when it comes to dealing with such situations, and Councillors may also ask for an opinion from the Committee.</p> <p>Christy agreed to circulate to the Committee Coyote Canada's training module, and she encouraged members to take a look at this so they are well informed of coyote activities.</p> <p>Dr. Esther Attard advised that the City of Toronto is dealing with similar coyote situations, which is an annual occurrence. She further advised that the City of Toronto is also promoting education, as that seems to be the only way forward.</p> <p>She advised that removing coyotes from their natural habitat is very difficult, moreover, they will have to be euthanized. They cannot just be relocated to a new area. If residents are informed about this issue, that will have a lasting impact.</p> <p>Dr. Attard advised of a resident who hired an animal trapper to trap coyotes from their private property, which is permitted by the MNRF legislation, however, the trapper ended up trapping a neighbour's cat, who was injured in the exercise, and had to undergo medical intervention for the injuries sustained. This ultimately cost the cat owner a lot of money, which ended in animosity between the neighbours. Education is the best option.</p> <p>Dr. Attard advised that the City of Toronto has developed e-Learning modules and a Coyote Fact Sheet for educating the community. The City of Toronto also sends out annual coyote season notifications to alert the community and keep them informed. The City is also working on preparing an educational video on coyote aversion</p>	
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	<p>techniques. She also reiterated that feeding of wildlife is the largest contributing factor to wildlife encounters in the community.</p> <p>Aviva suggested that the Animal Care Committee reinforces its support to Christy in all her efforts on this matter.</p> <p>Sherry Klein suggested that residents should be aware of potential wildlife when they purchase residential properties that back onto ravines.</p> <p>Moved by Aviva Harari Seconded by Janet Andrews</p> <p>That Valerie Burke, Vice Chair of the Animal Care Committee send a communication to the City Clerk advising that the Committee supports education and stricter enforcement as the most appropriate steps towards mitigation of coyote interactions with the public; and that the Committee vehemently opposes the lethal removal and/or relocation of any wildlife.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Carried</p>	
4. Animal Services Program Update	<p>Adam Freeman and Terry Zelinski, two of the six By-law Enforcement Officers from OSPCA who have now transferred to the City of Markham since April 1, 2021, introduced themselves and gave a brief overview of their responsibilities with the City's Enforcement Services.</p> <p>Responding to a question from a Committee member, Christy advised that all wildlife related calls are answered by the City's Contact Centre during business hours. For after-hours, calls are routed to the answer machine of the By-law Enforcement Officers' phones. Calls after 11:00 p.m. are answered by By-law Enforcement Officers and responded to appropriately.</p> <p>Similarly, on statutory holidays, calls are routed to the on-duty Animal Care Officers.</p> <p>Christy advised that majority of the calls received are with respect to coyotes. Staff are monitoring four particular areas in the City. It is noted that frequent calls are received from the</p>	

	<p>same individuals. Constant patrolling, educating residents on pet ownership, and not feeding wildlife are some of the major aspects of the work involved.</p> <p>Christy advised that she has received numerous calls from residents complimenting the efforts of the two new Animal Care Officers (Adam Freeman and Terry Zelinski).</p> <p>Aviva shared commendations from one of her neighbours relating to the excellent job done by Adam in his response to a call.</p> <p>On behalf of the Animal Care Committee, Valerie Burke, Vice Chair, expressed gratitude to Adam and Terry for their excellent work.</p> <p>Christy advised that Animal Services staff have responded to 189 calls, 93 of which were related to wildlife issues.</p> <p>Christy further advised that she will be reporting these statistics to Council and the Committee every month.</p>	
a. Events	<p>a. Fundraising</p> <p>Responding to a question about funds, Janet Andrews advised that back in the day, the money that came to the City as donations through the licensing program, did come to the ACC, and the Committee had its own trust fund, and these monies were used to pay for things like booth rental at an event. Janet further advised that in the past 6 or 7 years, the City allocated a small budget for the ACC, which covered these costs, and the Committee did not have to pay from their own funds.</p> <p>Janet further advised that for two years, the Committee collected approximately \$8,000 each year through the sale of pet calendars. The Committee initially donated \$30,000 to the CAEC, and since then another \$6,000. The Committee has its own trust fund through the City, and any funds raised by the Committee through donations received at events, etc. is deposited in the trust fund through the City Clerk's Office.</p>	

	<p>Janet advised that due to the pandemic, the Committee has not been able to fund raise, and so the financial situation remains unchanged for more than 18 months.</p> <p>Valerie Burke, Vice Chair advised that the Committee has access to a small budget every year to cover costs for printing, entry fees for various festivals or events, etc.</p> <p>Bernice Royce suggested that licensing fees should go to Animal Services, and donations, if any should be earmarked to address specific problems, e.g. coyotes, etc. Bernice further advised that the ACC was fund raising to cover costs for attending festivals and events. Furthermore, the ACC heavily fundraised to get the CAEC off the ground.</p> <p>Valerie advised that when the CAEC project was initiated, the partnership with the ACC proved very beneficial. ACC's fundraising for this initiative was very well received. Valerie further suggested that the ACC should do everything it can to support the CAEC and was of the opinion that this matter should be considered at a future ACC meeting.</p> <p>Areez Remtulla supported the idea of having a specific cause when seeking donations through pet licensing.</p> <p>Janet Andrews advised that not all residents are aware of the various programs and services provided by the City's Animal Services for pets and wildlife. She suggested that when licensing information is being prepared for 2022, residents should be advised that donations are welcome for the City's animal services to cover the costs of particular programs and services, and a list of what the City does should be included. This way residents will be more inclined to donate when they know how their donations are being utilized.</p> <p>Janet advised that the Municipality of Clarington's inauguration of their animal</p>	
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	<p>shelter caused licensing revenues to go through the roof, because people recognized that their donations were going to support the shelter. Janet was of the opinion that the Pet Licensing Form should not indicate donations will be going to a particular service, e.g. \$2 for coyotes, or \$2 for wildlife, etc. because that will end up being an accounting nightmare.</p> <p>Responding to a question about how much money the Committee receives in the form of donations, Christy advised that she would find out details and report back at a later date. She explained the extent of wildlife and animal care services currently being provided by the OSPCA and Shades of Hope for the municipality.</p> <p>Responding to a question relating to providing financial assistance to pet owners, Christy advised that this may not be feasible administratively, considering the various components involved in extending such a service to the residents.</p> <p>Christy advised that the description of the Animal Care Committee is available on the City's website along with the descriptions of all the other advisory committees. She further advised that she is working on revising the online Pet Licensing Form and she will be deleting any irrelevant material from the page.</p> <p>Christy advised that this is the first time the City has had resources dedicated specifically for animal services. For the past fifteen years that the ACC has been in existence in the City, it was either her or another staff member, not fully dedicated to animal services, who have been doing this work, in addition to the other roles and responsibilities of their own positions.</p> <p>Christy advised that it has only been six weeks since her appointment as the Animal Care Supervisor. She further advised that she plans to update the website and hopes</p>	<p>Christy to find out details of donations received by the ACC.</p>
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	<p>that the messaging becomes clear to the residents. The newly appointed Animal Care Officers have also been a great help in the community in terms of educating the residents on the benefits of pet licensing, interacting with wildlife, etc. Considering the recently enhanced resources, and an increased social media presence, she is confident of an improved level of animal services in the City, however; this change is likely to take some time.</p> <p>Dr. Esther Attard explained the functions of animal services in the City of Toronto. She further mentioned that animal services in the City of Markham will improve in time, with the current additional resources in place. She was of the opinion that the Pet Licensing Form should list the animal services programs and services currently in place, so residents are aware of how their donations are being utilized.</p> <p>Valerie Burke, Vice Chair agreed with the suggestions, as that will encourage residents to donate.</p> <p>Valerie advised that the current Terms of Reference for the Animal Care Committee are general in nature, specifically with respect to fund raising, and may need some revision at a later date.</p> <p>b. Shades of Hope Wildlife Events No events have been scheduled for this year due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic situation.</p>	
6. New Business	<p>a. Illegal activities in German Mills Meadow Aviva Harari advised of illegal activities like flying of drones, driving ATVs, etc. in the German Mills Meadow. These activities are causing danger to at least two species-at-risk birds that are nesting in the Meadow. She also advised that flying of drones could potentially result in privacy issues.</p> <p>Valerie Burke, Vice Chair advised that the German Mills Meadow is located on the former Sabiston Landfill Site. The meadow is</p>	

	<p>a result of the closing of the landfill with a thick clay cap, and nature has healed this site. Illegal drone flying and ATV driving in the meadow is causing an impact on two at-risk bird species that live in the meadow.</p> <p>Valerie further advised that she is aware of a ratepayers' group in the area that is putting up signs, etc. to promote education, but she is not aware of any City By-laws that prohibit such activities in the municipality.</p> <p>Christy Lehman, Animal Care Supervisor, advised that she attended a meeting of the City's German Mills Meadow and Natural Habitat Liaison Committee very recently where all these issues were discussed, most of which are enforcement related. Animal Services Officers have been regularly patrolling the area, but ultimately the City may have to consider a zero-tolerance approach to tackle these problems.</p> <p>Christy suggested emailing Todd Wilkinson, Acting Manager of By-law Enforcement, advising him of the Animal Care Committee's concerns. He may be able to provide an update on the City's enforcement activities, and possibly share related legislation with the Committee.</p> <p>Valerie Burke, Vice Chair agreed to email Todd, on behalf of the Animal Care Committee.</p> <p>b. Future high-density development plans in the Bayview and John Street area near Thornhill Square</p> <p>Aviva Harari expressed concerns about the future plans for high-density development (six 50-storey towers) along Highway 7, east of Bayview. She further advised about the potential impact these developments would have on wildlife in the area.</p> <p>Aviva inquired if the Committee could ask the City to conduct environmental impact studies prior to approving such high-density developments.</p>	<p>Valerie to email Todd re illegal activities in German Mills Meadow</p>
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	<p>Valerie Burke, Vice Chair encouraged members to send communications to the Development Services Committee expressing concerns of the potential impact of these developments on wildlife in the area.</p> <p>She further advised that a Statutory Public Meeting is scheduled to be held on June 15th to consider a development application to develop five (5) high-rise residential towers on the subject property, ranging between 18 and 35 storeys in height, and containing a total of 1,287 apartment dwelling units.</p> <p>The subject lands contain the Shouldice Hospital, a surface parking lot, mature vegetation, valley lands to the west, and features several cultural heritage resources including the McCullagh Estate House, the Gatehouse and Stables and Gardener's Cottage.</p> <p>Responding to a question, Valerie advised members to check the Committee Meetings section of the City's website, where relevant information on the various Committees of Council and the agendas of upcoming meetings is available. Information on public participation in these public meetings is also available.</p> <p>Responding to a suggestion that the Animal Care Committee write to the City, Valerie advised that individual communications would have a greater impact, as compared to the Committee writing as one body.</p> <p>Valerie advised the Committee that York Region has called a public meeting to consider the City of Markham's development of the white belt land to accommodate growth up to the year 2051. She suggested that residents participate in such meetings.</p> <p>c. Next meeting Valerie Burke, Vice Chair, suggested that the next meeting of the Animal Care</p>	
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	Committee be held in September. Committee members were in agreement of this suggestion.	
7. Communication	None.	
8. Date of the Next Meeting	The next Animal Care Committee meeting will be held on September 15, 2021, at 5:30 PM.	
9. Adjournment	The Animal Care Committee adjourned at 7:15 PM.	

ACTION ITEMS

Action Item	Meeting Date	Person Responsible	Status
Conduct a breakeven analysis to determine the ideal price of the cookbook	December 16, 2020	Judy Postello	On hold awaiting legal advice from the City's Legal Department
Animal related activities for kids	February 17, 2021	OSPCA to contact York Region School Board	
CAEC virtual online activities for kids	March 17, 2021	OSPCA to circulate information to ACC to pass on to their networks.	
Update and annotate the inconsistencies on all pet licensing web pages	March 17, 2021	June to update and annotate the inconsistencies on all pet licensing web pages	
Financial review of the Animal Care Committee	May 19, 2021	Mary-Jane Courchesne to include as agenda item for September.	
Donations to ACC	May 19, 2021	Christy to provide details of donations to ACC	
Live trapping of wildlife information on website	May 19, 2021	Christy to delete information from website.	
Illegal activities in the German Mills Meadow and Natural Habitat	May 19, 2021	Valerie to email Todd Wilkinson, Acting Manager of Enforcement about the Committee's concerns related to illegal activities in the German Mills Meadow and Natural Habitat	