

COUNCIL REPORT

August 12, 2009

To: Mayor & Council

From: Bill Preisentanz, CAO

Re: Rescue North Service Agreement

Background

Early in 2008, Council was updated on a newly established organization known as Rescue North comprised of a group of individuals from the Kenora District who were interested in animal welfare and investigating options in developing a model to replace the OSPCA who had decided to close its facility in Kenora. Commencing February 2008, the closest OSPCA locations for the Region was Thunder Bay or Winnipeg. From Rescue North's perspective, the most logical and viable location to establish their operation was the former OSPCA location on Highway 17 West (Stan Phinney's building).

Council will recall that the former OSPCA location on Highway 17 West was zoned Light Industrial and while the City's current Zoning Bylaw provided for kennel operations, it conflicted with the Animal Control Bylaw requirement for Rural zoning. Council proceeded in May 2008 to amend the Animal Control Bylaw (Bylaw No. 78-2008) by allowing a kennel operation to be permitted on property zoned Rural or Light Industrial and under the following conditions:

- 3.2.5** *A Kennel Business for dogs will be permitted to operate on a property zoned "Light Industrial" only if the following conditions are complied with:*
- a) the dogs shall be housed in a building which prevents substantially all noise from emanating therefrom, and*
 - b) the dogs shall not be kept outdoors except when they are walked on a leash*

Rescue North Proposal

After a one year operation, the Rescue North operation has struggled to remain financially viable with no OSPCA funding and limited results from fund raising. On August 11th Rescue North delivered a written proposal to City Hall outlining the potential use of the Rescue North Animal Shelter for animal control purposes on behalf of the City.

In the proposal:

Rescue North would:

- Supply a 5,000 sq.ft. building for one year with a 90 day escape clause
- Supply all utilities for the building
- Supply two offices for City Animal Control officers
- Provide animal shelter services on behalf of the City after hours, weekends and statutory holidays
- Supply animal food and cat litter as donations allow
- Supply cleaning supplies
- Supply bank of cat cages for City use

City of Kenora would:

- Clean cages and care for City animals during the normal work week
- Supply food and cat litter when donations unavailable
- Assume veterinarian costs related to City animals
- Pay \$3,600 per month to Rescue North
- Pay capital cost of installing 8 kennels (\$10,000 estimate)

This proposal has some specific deadlines based on the shut down of Rescue North operations by August 31, 2009 if the Rescue North proposal is not accepted by the City.

Financial

In relocating to the Rescue North facilities, an annual cost savings of \$17,000 to the City would result based on:

- i) \$11,100 - staff salaries for pound duties on weekends and holidays
- ii) \$3,100 – hydro, water & sewer costs at present Animal Control building
- iii) \$300 – cleaning and miscellaneous supplies
- iv) \$2,500 est. – building maintenance costs

On the other hand, additional annual cost of \$43,200 plus \$10,000 one-time capital cost to the City would result based on:

- i) \$43,200 – annual rental fee to Rescue North (\$3,600 x 12)
- ii) \$10,000 – one time capital cost for 8 animal cages (4'x 8')

City of Kenora Animal Control Facility

The City's present facility located on Highway 596 was built in the mid-1980's. It houses 8 kennels with 7 associated runs as well as cat cages. The building has water and sewer services and is heated electrically. The City's Building Official considers the facility to be in good condition and with annual maintenance, has a minimum of 10 years remaining life before any major renovations.

The City animal pound on Highway 596 has some real advantages with its location, in spite of its proximity to the historical Rat Portage route to the Winnipeg River. The City has extensive City property to the north and west which provides opportunities for renovation and expansion should it be required and could accommodate a buffer zone.

Operationally, the facility is visited at least once per day by an animal control officer to care and feed the animals including weekends and holidays if animals are being housed. Animals are housed up to 4 days and if not claimed within that period, become the ward of the City. In the past few years, the City has worked closely with the volunteer group, It's a Dogs Life, to provide foster homes and adoption services for dogs. There is a similar story for cats with the Cat Shelter housing and finding homes for cats. It was noted that in the past 3 years the City has not had to euthanize one dog or cat.

Animal Control - Unincorporated Areas

The closing of their facility and reduction of OSPCA services to the Kenora area will have impacts on the City due to the lack of any animal services in the unincorporated area. In the past year, Rescue North has attempted to provide housing and adoption services to abandoned animals. Unless animal control services are provided to the unincorporated areas then it only stands to reason that the animal control problems will migrate to the City. How significant this problem will be and the financial impact on the City is unknown at this time.

Summary:

The Animal Control function has just recently been transferred to the City from the Police Services Board and based on past history has cost the taxpayers approximately \$125,000 annually, net of licenses and fees. In this short time, there are a number of operational issues which have been identified including review of the Animal Control Bylaw. Fortunately, there are the three groups in Kenora who support and supplement Kenora's animal control function, It's a Dogs Life, Rescue North and the Cat Shelter. Their work in fostering and adopting abandoned animals in the Kenora area is noteworthy and should be supported.

Rescue North, unlike the other volunteer groups, is an incorporated body which has a governance structure and paid staff in addition to volunteers. Their mandate goes beyond the fostering and adoption of animals and is more focused on animal welfare. They have regional, national and international connections and can access resources in developing strategies for the City in addressing and promoting animal welfare.

From a financial point of view, the Rescue North proposal provides no cost savings, and in fact, is an added burden to the taxpayers. Rescue North, however, has access to information and resources which would assist the City in developing strategies and addressing the animal issues within the City and outlying areas. For Council, the question is whether these resources will be lost if the Rescue North proposal is not accepted.

In the event the Rescue North facility was used by the City, the restrictions placed on a kennel operation under the Animal Control Bylaw is a concern. With no access to the outside runs, dogs brought to the facility would be placed in 4'x8' cages for up to 4 days. While this situation could be alleviated if Rescue North volunteers walked the dogs, the proposal makes no provision for this service.

In reviewing all options with the administration staff, the recommended course of action was to support the use of the existing animal control shelter in conjunction with Rescue North and the volunteer groups in developing a model to address animal care and placement for the future. OSPCA also needs to be included in discussions surrounding the unincorporated and reserve areas outside the City limits.

Recommendation:

That Council of the City of Kenora hereby support the continued use of the animal control facilities on Highway 596 and respectfully decline the proposal of Rescue North to provide animal shelter services at its Highway 17 West location.