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Town of Aurora

General Committee Report

No. PDS20-044

Subject: Town of Aurora Proposed Anti-Idling Policy

Prepared by: Natalie Kehle, Energy and Climate Change Analyst

Department: Planning and Development Services

Date: October 6, 2020

Recommendation

1. That Report No. PDS20-044 be received; and
2. That Council approve the Town of Aurora Anti-Idling policy attached to this report.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to present to General Committee the proposed Anti-Idling Policy for the Town of Aurora (see Attachment 1). The Policy establishes general guidance on limiting unnecessary idling of vehicles and equipment within the Town of Aurora. The Policy aligns with existing Town By-laws limiting vehicle idling by the public, specifically the Noise By-law (By-law Number 4787-06P).

- The Anti-Idling Policy addresses three important goals; limits vehicle idling from vehicles, provides a three pronged education campaign, and introduces an enforcement mechanism.
- The Anti-Idling Policy is based on the Noise By-Law and leverages existing enforcement.
- The majority of York Region's area municipalities limit vehicle idling to two to three minutes regulated by standalone anti-idling by-laws.
- Based on the experience in implementing the Anti-Idling Policy (through the education campaign and enforcement), staff recommend that the Policy be reviewed in two years.

Background

Council and staff have been tackling vehicle idling over the years through a variety of initiatives; including an education campaign in 2010 that resulted in seventeen anti-idling signs being displayed at Town facilities and limits on idling to reduce nuisance and noise under the Noise by-law and under the Parks and Public Places by-law.

In 2010, the Town's Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) recommended to Council that an anti-idling by-law be drafted and implemented. This process, however, was halted as Town staff expressed concerns about enforcement. The item was referred to Council and it was recommended that the Mayor sign letters to various agencies about anti-idling.

Council Motion

On June 26, 2018, Council passed the following motion:

"Now Therefore Be It Hereby Resolved That staff be directed to develop an Anti-idling policy that reviews best practices and includes an enforcement mechanism; and Be It Further Resolved That the report includes a proposed public education campaign."

Town By-Laws

The Town's Noise By-law (By-law Number 4787-06P) was enacted in 2006 with clauses limiting vehicle idling with the primary intent of preventing disturbance from noisy vehicles idling in, or near, residential areas, rather than reduce vehicle emissions.

According to By-law Number 4787-06P, Schedule A General Noise Prohibitions, Section 9: the operation of a vehicle that is stationary is limited to five minutes. There are two exceptions: when engines or motors are essential to the basic function of the vehicle or equipment and where weather conditions justify the use of the engine or motor for safety or welfare.

The Town's Parks and Public Places By-law (By-law Number 4752-05.P) was enacted in 2005 and includes limits to vehicle idling. The intent for the by-law is to limit nuisances, including noise from vehicle idling, within Town parks to five minutes. Exemptions include: the drivers, operations or other personnel of ambulances, police or fire department vehicles while engaged in the performance of their duties and employees or agents of the municipality while engaged in works or services undertaken for or on behalf of the municipality.

Corporate Environmental Action Plan 2010-2015

Town initiatives involving limiting vehicle greenhouse gas emissions from vehicle idling started in 2010, in the first CEAP. In 2010, the Town introduced an anti-idling initiative, aimed at educating the public on the environmental impacts of idling vehicles. This initiative included the installation of seventeen Idle Free Zone signs at six Town owned facilities.

Corporate Environmental Action Plan 2018-2023

The most recent CEAP also aims at tackling vehicle idling in the Town with the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Actions items include reducing idling from Town staff, the public and increasing the overall community awareness of the impacts of idling. The proposed Anti-Idling Policy incorporates the action items of these two environmental plans.

Analysis

The Anti-Idling Policy addresses three important goals; limits vehicle idling from vehicles, provides a three pronged education campaign, and introduces an enforcement mechanism.

Since the Policy applies to all of Aurora, Town staff using fleet vehicles will need to comply with the general provisions of the Policy. In addition to the Policy, Town Staff will have further direction, training and compliance for vehicle idling under a proposed Green Fleet Policy, scheduled to be presented to Council before the end of the year.

The implementation of the Policy includes an education campaign and enforcement by Town's By-law Officers. Education will be the main strategy with the public in implementing the provisions of the Policy. The Town will develop a webpage dedicated to idling education, with facts, stats and tips for reducing vehicle idling as demonstrated by the City of Barrie's webpage (see Attachment 4).

The education campaign will consist of three marketing strategies lead by the Town's Communications Team:

- (1) An Initial Anti-Idling Town-wide Campaign, which consists of a onetime promotion of the Policy, over the course of a Season, once the Policy is approved by Council. The campaign's main focus is on the environmental and health benefits of limiting idling and on the existing Town By-laws that limit idling in the Town.

- (2) Periodic and Targeted Anti-Idling Campaigns, which consists of educating a focused group based on needs. Periodic focus groups may include, but not limited to:
- Aurora GO station users
 - School zones
 - Town recreation centres
 - Bus stations and carpool parking lots
- (3) Seasonal Reminder Campaign, which consists of an annual reminder of the Policy to the general public.

Marketing strategies may include, but are not limited to, social media announcements, Town Notice Board, Town Website, the use of signage, handing out flyers, etc.

By-law Services will play an important role in implementing an education first campaign in cases of failure to comply, while utilizing the enforcement mechanism outlined in the Policy at their discretion.

The Anti-Idling Policy is based on the Noise By-Law and leverages existing enforcement.

The development of the Anti-Idling Policy is based on two existing Town by-laws limiting unnecessary vehicle idling. Aurora has two existing by-laws that limit vehicle idling; the Noise By-law and the Park By-law. Since the Noise By-law is the more extensive of the two in terms of limitations and exemptions, the Policy follows the Noise By-law (see Attachment 3).

The Policy mirrors the general provision of the Noise By-law, which limits vehicle idling to five minutes. Two exemptions are when idling is essential to the basic function of the vehicle or equipment it is running or due to weather conditions.

Non-compliance of the Anti-Idling Policy may lead to penalties, if found to be in violation of the Noise By-law, at the discretion of the Town's By-law Officer.

The majority of York Region's area municipalities limit vehicle idling to two to three minutes regulated by standalone anti-idling by-laws

Based on a municipal scan of neighboring jurisdictions (see Attachment 2 - including Newmarket, East Gwillimbury, King, Markham and Richmond Hill), Aurora and King are the only municipalities that utilize a Noise By-law to limit vehicle idling. Standalone anti-idling by-laws are the most common mechanism municipalities in Ontario use to

regulate vehicle idling (over 35 Ontario municipalities have adopted stand-alone by-laws). Aurora and King both limit idling to five minutes, while other area municipalities in York Region limit to two to three minutes.

The trend in anti-idling policy in Ontario is to further reduce the number of minutes a vehicle is allowed to idle, not only to reduce greenhouse gases emitted from vehicles, but also to support the enforcement of the by-laws. Based on the City of Toronto's experience with anti-idling since the 1990s, they lowered the allowable idling time from 3 minutes to one minute because it enabled enforcement of the by-law.

In addition, Natural Resources Canada promotes a 1 minute limit as a national guideline for limiting vehicle idling time.

Based on the experience in implementing the Anti-Idling Policy (through the education campaign and the enforcement mechanism), staff recommend that the Policy be reviewed in two years.

Since the Town's Noise By-law was drafted with a focus on limiting noise, not idling specifically, there are gaps in the provisions when compared to neighboring municipalities' stand-alone anti-idling bylaws. To align with neighboring Municipalities on idling limits, staff recommend that the Anti-Idling Policy be reviewed after a trial period of two years after this Policy is endorsed, to reflect the lessons learned during implementation and to align with local jurisdictions bylaws. Areas to consider in the alignment are the number of minutes a vehicle can idle (from five minutes to one to three minutes), and updating the list of exemptions to the bylaw to better clarify when a vehicle is in violation or not.

Advisory Committee Review

Staff requested input from the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) at their September 17th 2020 meeting. The Committee expressed support of limiting idling within the Town, with idling in school zones and from private fleet vehicles being especially a concern.

The Committee strongly encouraged that the idling limit be reduced from the proposed 5 minutes to 1-2 minutes to align with neighboring municipalities. In addition, the Committee requested that the Policy exemptions be more specific, as they are currently described too broadly. A mechanism for the public to contact By-law Services to report on excess idling in the Town was also recommended.

Finally, the Committee supported the education first strategy outlined in the Policy.

Legal Considerations

The implementation of the Anti-Idling Policy does not affect the Town's current by-laws and enforcement will rely on the Town's existing Noise and Parks By-laws. If enforcement action is necessary, the Town's By-law officers will be required to show that a violation of the Parks or Noise By-law occurred. Consequently, in order to prosecute a charge, an officer would not only have to demonstrate that a vehicle has in fact been idling for a period of longer than five minutes, but rather that it resulted in a noise in violation of the Noise By-law or a created a nuisance in a park or a public place in violation of the Parks By-law.

Financial Implications

The estimated cost for implementing the Anti-Idling Policy is \$3,000 in the first year to support the Initial Anti-Idling Town-wide campaign and no additional costs to support the Seasonal Reminder Campaign and the Periodic and Targeted Anti-Idling Campaigns, as per Table 1 below. The cost associated with implementing the Policy will be funded by the PDS-Engineering's current budget.

Table 1 – Estimated Cost Associated with the Anti-Idling Policy Education Campaign

Pamphlet/ postcard (for bylaw distribution)	\$ 500.00
Newspaper Ads (Auroran & Aurora Banner)	\$1500.00
Paid Social Media campaign (Facebook & Instagram)	\$ 200.00
Mobile Signs	\$ 800.00
Ongoing advertising in the Town Noticeboard when space permits (Auroran)	\$ 0
Series of York Region Media Group Geo-Fencing Digital Ads	\$ 0
Ongoing social media posts	\$ 0
Website presence (banner image, dedicated webpage etc)	\$ 0

TOTAL	\$ 3,000.00
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The \$1,500 estimate is for ads in both local newspapers for initial launch of the Policy. The Noticeboard, which is a full page ad, goes into the Auroran on a biweekly basis. The Town will promote the anti-idling campaign in the Noticeboard where space permits.

The \$3,000 is for the first year of the campaign, whereas subsequent years the Policy will be promoted online via social media, the Town's e-newsletter and website, as well as the Town Noticeboard, all of which have no budget implications for this campaign. If there is budget in subsequent years, paid online advertising to reach those not following the Town's social media accounts could be used, as well as Mobile Signs for a specified month in the year.

In a typical year, the Town performs in-person outreach activities regularly, another opportunity to promote the education campaign in person at no additional cost (excluding any printing needs for additional handouts). In-person outreach opportunities will be re-evaluated for next year.

Communications Considerations

The Town of Aurora will use 'Inform' as the level of engagement for this project, providing information and generating awareness to the public through a robust education campaign.

There are five different levels of community engagement to consider, with each level providing the community more involvement in the decision making process. These levels are: Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate and Empower. Examples of each can be found in the Community Engagement Policy. These options are based on the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum and assist in establishing guidelines for clearly communicating with our public and managing community engagement.

Link to Strategic Plan

This project supports the Strategic Plan goal of supporting environmental stewardship and sustainability, Objective 2: Continue to invest in green initiatives and infrastructure to promote environmentalism locally.

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. That Council direct staff to implement an Anti-idling By-law that aligns with other Anti-idling By-Laws in York Region, including a detailed list of exemptions and an enforcement mechanism that enables the public to file a complaint.

Conclusions

Staff, having considered the mechanisms available to limit the unnecessary idling of vehicles in Aurora and are of the opinion that a Town policy is the appropriate approach at this time.

The Policy addresses important Town goals in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere within Town limits through a robust education campaign and enforcement mechanism that leverages existing Town by-laws that limit vehicle idling.

Attachments

Attachment 1 – Proposed Town of Aurora Anti-Idling Policy
Attachment 2 – Municipal Scan of Anti-Idling Bylaws
Attachment 3 – Town of Aurora Noise Bylaw 4787-06.P
Attachment 4 – Parks and Public Places Bylaw 4752-05.P
Attachment 5 – City of Barrie Anti-Idling Education Website

Previous Reports

Community Advisory Committee Report No. CAC20-005, dated September 17, 2020.

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on September 17, 2020

Approvals

Approved by David Waters, MCIP, RPP, PLE, Director, Planning and Development Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer