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Town of Aurora

General Committee Report

No. FIN20-024

Subject: 2021 and 2022 Fees and Charges

Prepared by: Laura Sheardown, Financial Management Advisor

Department: Finance

Date: October 20, 2020

Recommendation

1. That Report No. FIN20-024 be received; and
2. That a by-law be enacted to set the 2021 and 2022 Fees and Charges for applications, permits, use of Town property, the sale of documents and for the prescribed service charges for administrative matters as itemized on the attached schedules.

Executive Summary

All fees and charges listed on the schedules attached to the Fees and Charges By-law are for user pay services, where the requesting party is the sole beneficiary from the service. Most of the fees are on a full cost recovery basis, which allows the Town to fully recover the costs of providing a specific service or use of property.

The regular review of the Fees and Charges By-law allows staff the opportunity to ensure that the Town is recovering the cost of user pay services and make changes if required. Please note that this review of the by-law is adjusting fees and charges for 2021 and 2022, which is necessary in order to continue to be aligned with the Town's multi-year budgeting framework.

- Inflationary increases to fees and charges were previously approved by Council
- The changes on the Town's fees and charges for 2021 and 2022 are predominantly a combination of adjustments for easier cash payments and the clarification of wording surrounding the fees

- Should a need arise to modify the fees and charges for 2021 or 2022, the Town's Fees and Charges By-law would require amendment

Background

Last review of Fees and Charges By-law

Council last reviewed the Town's Fees and Charges By-law in October of 2019. The by-law is structured to align fees with departmental owners in the form of schedules for each department in order to facilitate reviews and updates as required. It has been the Town's practice to review the attached schedules annually and to make revisions as required.

Analysis

Inflationary increases to fees and charges were previously approved by Council

In support of the multi-year operating budget framework, Council approved inflationary increases to most fees for 2021 and 2022 as part of the process last year. The inflationary increases are necessary in order to maintain desired applicable service cost recovery benchmarks.

The changes on the Town's fees and charges for 2021 and 2022 are predominately a combination of adjustments for easier cash payments and the clarification of wording surrounding the fees

All fees changes that have not yet been presented to Council are being in a separate column from those previously approved with the reasons and rationales listed below and are flagged with the '*' symbol on the right hand side. The final schedules to the Fees and Charges By-law will only include the 2021 and 2022 fee columns.

To make it easier for Town Staff to provide correct change in return, changes being made include the rounding up or down of the existing fee to the nearest 25 cents. Any changes to fee explanations include the old information being struck-through and the new information is underlined within the schedules.

Schedule A – General Fees and Charges

Changes for items with frequent cash payments only, to make it easier for user to provide the exact change and staff to provide change.

Schedule B – Planning and Development Services

Planning and Development Services is currently in the process of reviewing all of their fees included on this schedule and comparing them to other municipalities within York Region. This review has been delayed from last year, however it is anticipated that it will be completed and presented to Council when complete.

The explanations of several fees have been adjusted to better describe what is covered by these fees. The Engineering Drawings fee as well as the Request for Information fee have been revised to a more appropriate cost that is a better estimate of the services being provided. The financial security amount being held by the Town until the completion of grading reviews and pool inspections has also been increased.

Schedule C – Corporate Services

Almost all of the changes on this schedule include the refinement of the fee explanation to better describe what is covered by these fees.

The only other change on this schedule is the clarification that the Commissioning of pension documents for seniors are completed at no charge.

Schedule D – Community Services

A user fee review is currently underway and the results of this review will be presented to Council at a later date.

Almost all of the changes on this schedule include changes for items where a cash payment is often received to make providing change easier or the refinement of the fee explanation to better describe the purpose of the fee.

The fee for all non-Aurora based groups to access our artificial turf fields has been reduced as the current fee is prohibitive and user groups will not pay it. Staff have reviewed similar fees for other municipalities and are presenting a rate which is reflective of the average of other municipalities.

Schedule E – Operational Services

Operational services is in the process of updating the Roads Occupancy and Encroachment By-law, which has resulted in the following changes to their fees:

- Clarification of fee wording to ensure that it is consistent between the revised by-law and the Fees and Charges By-law
- Increase of the Road Occupancy Permit to be more reflective of the cost of providing this service
- Introduction of an Additional Inspection Fee for incomplete restorations that require more than the normal number of site visits (usually three are needed per permit)
- Introduction of an Encroachment Application Fee to recognize the staff time and effort that goes into the review of each application.

Schedule F – Finance

No changes are being requested at this time.

Schedule G – Building Division

No changes are being requested at this time.

Schedule H – Development Planning Division

No changes are being requested at this time.

Schedule I – By-law Services Division

By-law Services is requesting the addition of an Officer Paid Duty fee, which will allow the recovery of officer related expenses for compliance with permitting and legislative requirements.

Schedule J – Animal Services

The following new Animal Services fees are being introduced:

- Trapping Fee (includes food and trap): the provision of a trap and food bait to capture wildlife that is pestering the property owner

- Private Property deceased wildlife removal (bagged): removal of deceased wildlife from private property that has already been bagged by the property owner
- Private Property deceased wildlife removal (unbagged): collection and removal of deceased wildlife from private property that has not been bagged by the property owner
- Deceased domestic – small size: removal of small deceased domestic animals from private property (up to 15 lbs)
- Deceased domestic – medium size: removal of medium deceased domestic animals from private property (between 16 and 40 lbs)
- Deceased domestic – large size: removal of large deceased domestic animals from private property (between 41 and 100 lbs)
- Officer paid duty; similar to the By-law Officer Paid Duty fee but for Animal Control duties

Should a need arise to modify the fees and charges for 2021 or 2022, the Town's Fees and Charges By-law would require amendment.

As staff are setting the Town's fees and charges two years into the future, there is the possibility that one or more of these fees and charges may require revision as new information becomes available. In instances where staff determine that a new fee or charge revision is in order, a replacement fee and charge schedule for the year in question will be brought to Council for its review and approval.

Advisory Committee Review

The Finance Advisory Committee is not mandated to review the proposed fee changes prior to the review by General Committee.

Legal Considerations

Section 11(2)(3) and Section 391(1) of the Municipal Act allow a municipality to enact by-laws for its financial management, and in particular, to impose fees or charges on

persons for services or activities provided or done by or on behalf of it. Other provisions affecting the setting of fees and charges appear in the Planning Act and the Building Code Act.

Financial Implications

With regards to the Fees and Charges Bylaw, the revised fees proposed here have been utilized by staff in the development of their 2021 and 2022 revenue projections which form a critical component of the Town's identified tax levy requirements for each year.

The proposed 2021-22 fees and charges have been adjusted to reflect changes to departmental costs in providing applicable services to users. All fee increases will alleviate pressure on the 2021-22 tax base; when costs increase as a result of inflation, but non-tax revenues do not, the tax levy must accommodate this additional budget burden. Consequently, it is important that the Town's fees and charges keep pace with inflation; the proposed fees and charges contained within this bylaw strive to achieve this goal. Council should be aware that the fees presented in these schedules include HST where applicable.

Communications Considerations

The Town of Aurora will use 'inform' as the level of engagement for this project. There are five different levels of community engagement to consider, with each level providing the community more involvement in the decision making process. There 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.

Finance and Corporate Communications staff will work together to ensure the proposed fee changes are posted in accordance with the Town's Notice Provision Policy.

Link to Strategic Plan

Reviewing and updating the Town's fees and charges on a regular basis for user pay services contributes to achieving the Strategic Plan guiding principle of 'Leadership in Corporate Management' and improves transparency and accountability to the community.

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. Council may choose to accept, amend or reject any or all of the recommendations of this report.
2. Leave fees at previously approved 2021 and 2022 levels and absorb cost of providing services that a cost recovery fee has not been approved for within the Town's tax levy for the next two years.

Conclusions

Staff recommend endorsement of the proposed changes to the Fees and Charges Bylaw.

As part of the regular update of the Town's fees and charges, staff have ensured that all changes brought forward are a fair representation of the cost of these services and that they are in line with surrounding municipalities for similar services.

Attachments

Schedule A – General Fees and Charges

Schedule B – Planning and Development Services

Schedule C – Corporate Services

Schedule D – Community Services

Schedule E – Operational Services

Schedule F – Finance

Schedule G – Building Division

Schedule H – Development Planning Division

Schedule I – By-law Services Division

Schedule J – Animal Services

Previous Reports

None.

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on October 1, 2020

Approvals

Approved by Rachel Wainwright-van Kessel, Director, Finance

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer