



## The Corporation of the Town of Tecumseh

Corporate Services & Clerk

**To:** Mayor and Members of Council

**From:** Laura Moy, Director Corporate Services & Clerk

**Date to Council:** November 12, 2019

**Report Number:** CS-2019-24

**Subject:** DocuPet Licensing Program

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### Recommendations

It is recommended:

**That** a by-law **be prepared** to authorize the Mayor and the Clerk to execute an Agreement with DocuPet Inc. (DocuPet) for the provision of dog licensing services;

**And that** Report CS-2019-24 DocuPet Licensing Program **be received**.

### Background

The Town's Dog Control By-law No. 2003-91, as amended, (Dog Control By-law) requires every dog owner to annually make application for a dog tag (license). The tag helps to ensure a dog's safe return when found running at large, or found and reported by a neighbour. The fees collected from the Dog Tag and Licensing Program (Program) offset the costs associated with regulating and controlling dogs running at large, contracting a dogcatcher, as well as operation and capital costs for the Lakeshore Dog Pound.

The current fee for a dog tag is \$20.00 when purchased before March 31<sup>st</sup> and \$35.00 for tags purchased after March 31<sup>st</sup> each year.

Registered dog owners receive written notification of the requirement to renew their dog tags each year. Advertisements are placed in the local newspapers, posted to the Town's website and promoted on social media. Using the Town's Everbridge callout phone system, a 'friendly reminder' is also delivered to registered dog owners.

In 2017 and 2018 the Commissionaires, a local enforcement service, was retained to conduct a door-to-door canvas to: increase compliance with the Program; encourage responsible dog ownership and compliance with the Dog Control By-law; and for community safety. The increased compliance with the Program also assisted in updating the registry of dog owners for accuracy, future notifications and enforcement.

The Program requires significant staff time to create awareness, maintain accurate records, and coordinate the Commissionaire's service and enforcement.

## Comments

The main functions of most pet licensing programs are to return pets to their owners, control the population of feral animals, mitigate the spread of diseases and subsidize the cost of animal services. All of these functions make pet licensing important to animal control and welfare.

Like other pet licensing programs, the Town's Program is multifaceted and requires comprehensive planning and management, as well as significant staff time.

There are four pillars of a successful licensing program:

1. Awareness
2. Convenience
3. Incentives, and
4. Enforcement.

The Town's Program creates awareness, as above described and recently, with the assistance of the Commissionaires, there has been greater enforcement. The door-to-door canvas also enabled dog owners to conveniently purchase their tag(s) from home.

Research has been conducted on ways to improve and strengthen the pillars of the Town's Program in order to be more successful, particularly for convenience and incentives.

To that end, we have found the DocuPet licensing system could provide a comprehensive and customized website, branded to the Town of Tecumseh, that would allow for **convenient** online dog licensing and registration, enhanced dog and dog owner data collection, the provision of a "Lost Pet Alert" service, the presentation of local deals for registered dog owners, dog owner education, and other features designed to promote licensing.

Town administration would also have access through an administrative portal that would permit them to directly license dogs and process payments and renewals. The option for dog owners to automatically renew licenses could also be available.

When a dog owner registers their dog on-line using this service, DocuPet sends the owners a mailed package including their tag, reward cards and an information package.

Each tag has a unique identifier that will allow enforcement officers to look up dog information from any location. It also creates an on-line profile for the dog that the owner has the option to make public.

In addition, the DocuPet licensing system offers a reward program for owners by engaging local businesses and national sponsors to offer deals to owners. The goal of the program is to **incentivize** licensing so that purchasing a license is a net financial benefit to the owner.

The DocuPet proposal also offers to develop, implement and maintain a community representative program that will conduct door-to door visits to residents to increase awareness and license compliance.

Customer service is provided by DocuPet, weekdays from 9 am to 5 pm, for public enquiries.

DocuPet is currently known to be offering this service to the municipalities of Ajax, Kingston, Guelph, Newmarket, St. Catharines, Thorold and Clarington. References obtained by staff have been excellent. Municipalities using the service have reported good customer satisfaction, significant reductions in staff time previously committed to delivering this service and increases in license sales.

Staff in the Corporate Services and Clerks Department responsible for the administration of animal control services believe that this new model will offer improved customer satisfaction and the necessary incentives to increase licensing sales and compliance. It would also improve data collection and access, permitting better tracking of licensing information.

Information Technology staff have also been consulted and confirm that this system can be successfully adopted by the Town.

## **Consultations**

Financial Services  
Information & Communication Services

## **Financial Implications**

The financial analysis of the new system is complicated because the DocuPet pricing formula combines a flat fee per registration, plus a commission that only becomes payable once the license sales exceed the previous three-year average.

There are no upfront costs for set-up and there are no charges for customer service, over the phone sales (new or renewal), automated email renewal notices, automated robo-call reminders, community canvassing and event attendance, and online marketing.

The 2019 Budget for revenue from dog tags was \$34,000. The actual is anticipated to be \$36,000. DocuPet predicts that sales will increase from 5-15% if they are retained.

A cost of \$11,300 was incurred in 2019 for the Commissionaires' services, in addition to approximately \$1,700 for the cost of mailing notices, equipment rental of \$100 and \$420 to purchase tags. These costs would no longer be incurred directly by the Town, if DocuPet's services are retained.

The DocuPet proposal indicates their flat fee for registrations, mailings and commission would be approximately \$10,600 in the first year and would reach \$12,000 over a three-year period, if the revenue from dog tag fees were to reach \$42,000.

At current revenues, the cost of the DocuPet services would be less than the current expenses. As dog tag revenues increase, the cost for service by DocuPet would also increase.

In accordance with the Purchasing By-law 2017-63, a Department Director and Purchasing Coordinator, or CAO, have the authority to sole source a service under \$100,000. The online pet registration services provided by DocuPet are unique.

## Link to Strategic Priorities

Applicable	2019-22 Strategic Priorities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Make the Town of Tecumseh an even better place to live, work and invest through a shared vision for our residents and newcomers.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ensure that Tecumseh's current and future growth is built upon the principles of sustainability and strategic decision-making.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Integrate the principles of health and wellness into all of Tecumseh's plans and priorities.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Steward the Town's "continuous improvement" approach to municipal service delivery to residents and businesses.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Demonstrate the Town's leadership role in the community by promoting good governance and community engagement, by bringing together organizations serving the Town and the region to pursue common goals.

## Communications

Not applicable

Website

Social Media

News Release

Local Newspaper

This report has been reviewed by Senior Administration as indicated below and recommended for submission by the Chief Administrative Officer.

Prepared by:

Laura Moy, Dipl. M.M., CMMIII HR Professional  
Director Corporate Services & Clerk

Reviewed by:

Tom Kitsos, CPA, CMA, BComm  
Director Financial Services & Chief Financial Officer

Recommended by:

Margaret Misek-Evans, MCIP, RPP  
Chief Administrative Officer

<b>Attachment Number</b>	<b>Attachment Name</b>
None	None