

**THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF WINDSOR  
OFFICE OF THE CITY ENGINEER – OPERATIONS**

**MISSION STATEMENT:**

*"Our City is built on relationships - between citizens and their government, businesses and public institutions, city and region - all interconnected, mutually supportive, and focused on the brightest future we can create together."*

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| <b>LiveLink REPORT #: 17207 MHS/9496</b>         | <b>Report Date: May 27, 2014</b><br>(#3846-07/08/14:eb) |
| <b>Author's Name: Anne Marie Albidone</b>        | <b>Date to Council: July 21, 2014</b>                   |
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**To: Mayor and Members of City Council**

**Subject: SKUNK CONTROL PROGRAM UPDATE**

**1. RECOMMENDATION: City Wide:  Ward(s): \_\_\_\_\_**

- I) That Administration **BE DIRECTED** to cease the trapping portion of the skunk program effective August 4, 2014, and
- II) That Administration **BE DIRECTED** to continue the rat baiting program and education portion only of the skunk program until March 31, 2015, and
- III) That Administration **BE DIRECTED** to report back during budget deliberations on the rodent program for Council decision on future program funding.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: N/A**

**2. BACKGROUND:**

On March 24, 2013, Council passed resolution B11/2013:

"That the report of the City Engineer dated February 6, 2013 regarding "Skunk Control Program" BE RECEIVED, and further that \$250,000 BE ALLOCATED for the purpose of hiring a trapper (Option 2) for rodent control and that a report BE PREPARED for Council's consideration at the end of the one-year mark; and further, that By-law 2-2006 BE AMENDED to require residents to store garbage in hard-sided containers, but that this not be implemented or enforced for a one-year period in order to allow adequate further notice for this requirement."

This report deals specifically with the requested one-year mark report and whether the programs should continue past August 4, 2014.

**3. DISCUSSION:**

CR B11/2013 allocated \$250,000 for both Skunk removal and the Rodent/Rat baiting program. Previously funding for the rodent program was in the yearly budget of Environmental services.

The delivery of both services is done similarly where city staff inspects the premises for evidence of skunks or rats. In the case of skunks city staff set the trap and if skunk is caught, they retrieve the trap and the skunk is picked up by a contractor who disposes of the skunks. For rats, the contractor is called in to do the proper extermination.

### **Skunk Trapping**

The Skunk Trapping Program began in July 2013. Effective April 11, 2014, the trapping portion of the program was suspended due to the birth of young. The education portion of the program has continued. Since its inception and until April 11, 2014, only 0.4% of homeowners requested the service. Of those requests, 71.5% received service, 25% were not eligible for the program and 5.5% cancelled after implementing recommendations made by the trapper to deter the skunks.

In total, 48 skunks were trapped and euthanized under the program and 102 other wildlife were trapped and released immediately on-site.

Simultaneously with the City's trapping program, the Humane Society continued to collect sick, injured or dead skunks. Their statistics (historical and current) are indicated here:

2006 – 63  
2007 – 49  
2008 – 59  
2009 – 65  
2010 – 33  
2011 – 114  
2012 – 199  
2013 – 296 (255 were between Jan – July; 41 from Aug – Dec) *\*trapping began July 2013*  
2014 to date – 9

These numbers are reflective of not only the population (which would be directly correlated to the number of sick/injured/dead animals), but also of the natural regulation of the population due to disease and greater competition for food, water and shelter.

It is clear from the data presented that the City of Windsor's trapping program had little effect on the skunk population. However, that does not indicate a poor performing program. In fact, many properties serviced were altered as to deter wildlife and 13% of properties serviced resulted in successful trapping. The greatest number of sick/injured/dead animals collected by the Humane Society occurred in the 6 months prior to the start of the City's program.

Therefore, some of the properties serviced by the City program may have had a skunk that was collected by the Humane Society prior to trapping. Nonetheless, the significant decrease in population can most appropriately be attributed to natural regulation such as disease and resource limitations.

The stark drop in sick/injured skunks in the latter part of 2013 and early 2014 indicates that the population has returned to more normal levels. The continuation of the trapping program is likely to have no significant impact on the existing population and is not likely to prevent a population spike in the future.

Furthermore, the mandate of hardsided containers effective July 1, 2014 will further limit the food resource thereby impacting the sustainable skunk population as well as other wildlife. The spike seen in 2011-2012 is thought to be a domino effect of ideal environmental conditions: large food and water source, low population and ideal nesting sites. The heavy rain for example is thought to have contributed to greater number of bugs (i.e. grubs) which are known to be a food choice for skunks. For 5 years prior to the spike, skunk populations were relatively stable.

It is expected that they will continue to be so until environmental conditions lay the groundwork to support a population growth. Should residents continue to have skunk issues, there remains the option of hiring a private contractor to assist.

### **Rodent Baiting**

The Rodent Baiting Program has been established for over 15 years. This program is free to residents and provides education and baiting services outside the home.

The number of residential homes requesting this service has been relatively steady at on average, 418 baited properties per year over the last 5 years. The Humane Society gets a negligible amount of calls for sick/injured/dead rats. The population is regulated more significantly by the Rodent Baiting Program. Since rats are far more adaptable to their environment than skunks are and they can produce multiple large litters in a year, they are much more resilient. Rats can have 5 litters per year, with an average of 7 young per litter and the young are mature in 5 weeks.

Therefore, in one year alone, one fertile female can result in 3000 offspring. The virtual plateau in the number of requests over the last 5 years indicates that the program is still needed and is keeping the rodent population from increasing. However, it should be noted that most municipalities in Ontario do not offer any wildlife control programs (for skunk or rats) and simply provide education on deterrents and co-existence.

Administration recommends continuing with the rodent program and funding it for the remainder of 2014 and placing it within the consideration of 2015 operating budget. Administration also recommends discontinuing the Skunk Trapping Program. Endorsement of the two recommendations would result in the loss of one temporary part-time Local 543 position.

## **4. RISK ANALYSIS:**

### **Resource Risk:**

There are sufficient equipment and human resources to accomplish the recommendations of this report.

### **Timing Risk:**

A decision by Council is requested as soon as possible. The current contract for euthanasia expires July 30<sup>th</sup> but is capable of continuing on a monthly basis as required.

### **Political Risk:**

Continuing a Skunk Trapping Program will almost certainly elicit an immediate negative reaction from animal rights activist groups. It is unlikely that continuing the skunk program will have any significant impact on the skunk population. Also eliminating the skunk program will have a negative reaction from those that believe the city should deliver the service

However, there is a high risk of rat overpopulation should there not be a Rodent Baiting Program as they are not subject to the same natural regulation of their population as skunks. A spike in rodent population will certainly have a strong public outcry and would be a health concern in general.

**Mitigating Measures:**

Continuing to provide the Rodent Baiting Program will ensure their population remains low. The skunk population can be monitored through the Humane Society numbers and the program can be re-instated should the needs arise and the funds be available.

**5. FINANCIAL MATTERS:**

At the completion of one calendar year (July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013 – June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014), the skunk/rodent program has expended approximately \$220,000 of the full \$250,000 allocated through one-time funding in 2013, leaving an available balance of \$30,000. Furthermore, additional annual funding is available (approximately \$85,000) within the base budget of PW Environmental Services for the wages and benefits of one full-time Local 82 employee and the use of one internal fleet vehicle. Therefore, at June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014 \$115,000 in funding remains available to continue with the skunk/rodent program.

Based on historical program spending, if Council wishes to continue the rodent and skunk programming, the current funding would allow the program to continue through the end of the year, with an estimated 6-month cost of approximately \$110,000 (1/2 of the current annual cost of \$220,000). Additional one-time funding of approximately \$55,000 would be required to continue both programs through to the end of March 2015, at which time Administration would report back during budget deliberations on the rodent and skunk program for Council decision on future program funding

If Council wishes to continue the rodent program and the education-only portion of the skunk program as recommended in this report, no additional one-time funding would be required, as the anticipated program costs for the nine months to March 31, 2015 are expected to be in the range of \$11,000 per month, or approximately \$100,000. Again, the 2015 Operating Budget would include a report on future funding options for the rodent program for Council's consideration.

If **BOTH** programs are terminated, the Corporation would be able to redeploy one full-time Local 82 employee and truck rental to another department within Public Works. In addition, approximately \$30,000 in unspent funds could be returned to the Budget Stabilization Reserve.

The above options to make the Rodent and Skunk Control Programs permanent and increasing ongoing budget amounts in the operating budget will be brought forward as part of the 2015 Budget. Increasing the levels of services will place additional pressure on maintaining the current tax levy going forward.

**6. CONSULTATIONS:**

Windsor/Essex County Humane Society

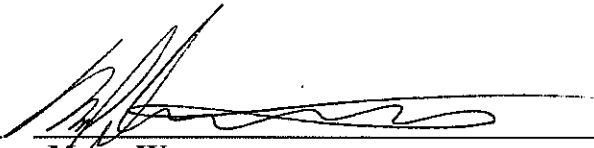
**7. CONCLUSION:**

The significant decrease in the number of skunks caught by the Humane Society suggests a significant reduction in the skunk population. Yet the rodent numbers indicate a strong need for a control program and hence the recommendation to continue that portion of the program for 2014.

Should Council wish to continue the rat program and the educational portion of the skunk program until March 31, 2015, then it can do so with no need for additional one-time funding. Ongoing funding for the program would be determined in a report back to City Council during the 2015 budget deliberations.



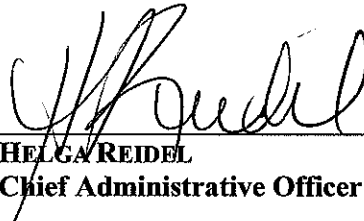
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**HELGA REIDEL**  
Chief Administrative Officer



*For* **ONORIO COLUCCI**  
Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer  
/Corporate Leader Finance & Technology

AA:

**APPENDICES:**

| NOTIFICATION : |         |               |           |     |
|----------------|---------|---------------|-----------|-----|
| Name           | Address | Email Address | Telephone | FAX |