

Subject: Bylaw No. 12/007 – Single-Use Shopping Bag Bylaw**APPROVALS:**

Glen Laubenstein, Chief Administrative Officer
Henry Hunter, Executive Director
Kevin Scoble, Director

Administrative Recommendations:

THAT Bylaw No. 12/007, being the Single-Use Shopping Bag Bylaw, be read a first time.

Summary:

On October 25, 2011 Council Resolution 11-274 directed Administration to evaluate recommendations to amend the Single-Use Shopping Bag Bylaw No. 09/033 to address concerns identified during the first year of implementation. Feedback from businesses, residents and environmental stakeholders has been collected through a series of public engagements to develop the proposed amendments.

Background:

Engagements were conducted through an independent consultant to gather feedback from the community and to assess the potential impact of the proposed changes to Bylaw No. 09/033.

The engagement program included the following elements:

- A summary report of key issues, suggestions, and underlying motivations of support or opposition from the 2011 evaluation reports.
- Two stakeholder workshops to review proposed direction and obtain input: January 10, 2012 with the environmental stakeholders and January 11, 2012 with representatives from the retail sector and the Chamber of Commerce.
- A web-based survey to test a variety of ideas for bylaw improvement and communication initiatives. The survey ran from December 23, 2011 to January 11, 2012, generating feedback from 984 self-selected municipal residents.
- An open house to gather feedback on evaluation results and the final proposed amendments before presenting to Council on March 27, 2012.

The proposed revised Single-Use Shopping Bag Bylaw is based on the common interests brought forward from the engagement process and the core principles of public health and safety, environmental sustainability, consumer privacy, retailer equality, and customer convenience. While many of the changes are intended to better define and clarify the intent of the Bylaw, the primary amendments focus on:

- a redefinition of single use bags and reusable containers to a performance-based standard (Attachment 2, Page 2)
- additional exemptions to the current Bylaw (Attachment 2, Page 3)

With both strong support and strong opposition from the community, the proposed revisions, along with communication plan enhancements, are expected to achieve the following results:

- An increase in support for the Bylaw through the addition of requested changes to address public concerns of food safety, health, privacy, and convenience irritants.
- A decrease in frustration levels experienced at check-out counters.
- Encouraged use of re-usable shopping bags. As habits become established, the cultural change will swing toward the neutral or supportive side.

The research indicates that the proposed revisions will not eliminate the polarized opinions within the Municipality, but will reduce the opposition levels through a six percent increase overall of those residents in support of the Bylaw (currently forty percent) and a ten percent decrease in those opposed (currently fifty-six percent). The remaining eight percent are neutral; they neither oppose nor support the Bylaw.

Budget/Financial Implications:

The financial impact for the Municipality in 2012 will range between \$50,000 to \$75,000 which will be absorbed in the existing operating budget. The funds will be used to enhance regional awareness, provide education, and maintain support tools for business.

The financial impacts of Bylaw 09/033 on the commercial sector are:

- Businesses indicate a distributed financial impact with thirty-seven percent of respondents experiencing net gains, forty-six percent experiencing net costs, and seventeen percent indicating no financial impact. Those reporting net gains were mostly small-to-medium size retailers (average \leq \$1,000), while those reporting net costs were larger retailers (some reporting six figure impacts). Increases in property theft, including security measures, and a reduction in local shopping were the largest contributors.
- Fifty-nine percent of commercial respondents indicate shoplifting trends have stabilized and have remained the same since September 2010.
- Retailers eliminated 7.8 million bags from distribution; however, an additional 6.0 million bags were sold for single-use purposes resulting in a current net reduction of 1.8 million bags.

Rationale for Recommendation:

Administration's recommendation is based on the environmental benefits from an estimated reduction of 1.8 million single-use bags from the landfill, the associated aesthetic improvements in the community, and a continued alignment with the sustainability principles as outlined in the Municipal Development Plan.

Administration recommends the proposed revisions to the Single-Use Shopping Bag Bylaw to balance sustainability principles with stakeholder concerns.

Attachments:

1. Bylaw No. 12/007
2. Single-Use Shopping Bag Bylaw Comparison