SUBJECT: Maintaining Animal Control Customer Service Counter Hours of Operation (PED09276) - (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

That approval be given to the addition of .66 FTE to the existing staff complement, for which funding already exists in the Animal Control budget in order to maintain current counter service hours at the Animal Control facility.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In September 2007, two full time and two part time Dispatch positions, were transferred from Animal Control to the Customer Contact Centre to facilitate a corporate after-hours dispatch service. Consequently, many of the additional clerical duties previously performed by the staff formerly occupying those positions were left to the two remaining Clerk Receptionists, with some assistance from one temporary clerk and three work accommodated staff “on loan” to Animal Control from other departments.

As of July 24th, 2009, the work accommodated employees assisting with records filing and the processing of recently enhanced dog license sales, were no longer available to work at the Animal Control shelter and, as of the writing of this report, the funding for the aforesaid “temporary clerk” has expired. Consequently, a severe strain on Animal Control administrative and clerical support staff resources is already being experienced and an inordinate amount of overtime is now being accrued and/or paid out.
As part of the 2009 budget process, staff recommended increasing the Animal Control administrative and support staff complement by 1.5 FTE, in accordance with the 2008 Animal Control Operational Review which recognized that the aforesaid additional FTE would be necessary to maintain the existing “extended customer services hours” at the Animal Control facility. However, the Economic Development and Planning Committee, at its meeting of January 28, 2009, did not approve that recommendation.

A legislated operation such as the City’s Animal Control program cannot be sustained by relying on work accommodated staffing for any of its critical functions, including customer service and administrative support requirements mandated by Provincial legislation. Therefore, to accommodate the staffing shortfall it is now recommended that Council approve the addition of 0.66 FTE, for which funding already exists, and which, when combined with a 1.34 FTE that will become available through a reorganization of the section, will increase the number of Clerk Receptionist from two to three and the number of Operations Clerks from three to four, allowing the customer service counter to remain open during those hours to which the public has become accustomed.

**BACKGROUND:**

In 2007, as part of an operational review of the Building and Licensing Division undertaken at the direction of Council, the Planning and Economic Development Department engaged Performance Concepts Consulting Limited to evaluate the Animal Control Services section. The recommendations contained in the Consultant’s report, and in staff’s follow-up report, were approved by Council, in one form or another, on October 15th, 2008.

One of the approved recommendations was to refer to the 2009 budget process a $101,200.00 staffing enhancement to fund the additional 1.5 FTE required to accommodate the increased administrative work load and to maintain the existing extended customer service hours in effect at the Animal Control facility. Performance Concepts concluded that the transfer of staff from Animal Control to the Customer Contact Centre created a void in Animal Control staff resources, specifically that; “with the ongoing increase of licensing and processing renewals, the section will require a support role to assist with the added work as well as provide front-counter extended customer service hours during the week and on weekends”.

Although staff recommended referring the subject 1.5 FTE increase in Animal Control staff to the 2009 budget process, the Committee did not approve staff’s recommendation. Consequently, it became necessary to contemplate a reorganization of the section to accommodate either a reduction in customer service hours or a reduction in other services offered by Animal Control. A review of enforcement statistics for 2006, 2007 and 2008 has revealed a recently stabilized decline in the demand for enforcement respecting the “Pit Bull Ban”, which came into effect in 2006 and for which an additional Officer position was created through an operational reorganization undertaken that same year.

Consequently, staff now recommends that Council approve an increase of .66 FTE in the Animal Control staff complement which, when combined with a soon to be available 1.34 FTE, will bring the total number of customer service staff up from two Clerk Receptionists and three Operations Clerks to three Clerk Receptionists and four Operations Clerks as
required to accommodate the core clerical duties required by the operation of a municipal animal shelter (i.e. a municipal pound).

**ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:**

The animal control operation is divided into three distinct functional areas;

- **Enforcement** is a 24/7 (365) operation with 12 full time officers, overseen by one supervisor. Enforcement staff are responsible for, among other things, enforcement of seven animal related by-laws and the regulations under the Dog Owner’s Liability Act, removal of animal carcasses from public and private property, impounding stray animals, on-site release or euthanasia of trapped wildlife, and euthanizing or transporting injured animals to emergency veterinary clinics.

- **Pound Keeping** is a 12/7 (365) operation with a 24/7 “call out” provision. Staffing includes a part time cleaner, a full time custodian/veterinary assistant, seven full time animal care attendants and a full time veterinary technician, overseen by one supervisor. Pound Keeping staff are responsible for the care, feeding and medical treatment of all animals that come into the custody of the City. Approximately 6,000 to 7,000 animals are cared for by City staff each year and almost two thirds of those animals are returned to their original owners or placed with new owners. Animal care staff and the custodian/veterinary assistant also assist the contract veterinarian with euthanasia.

- **Administrative and Support Services** operates 12 hours per day on weekdays (being open to the public 10 of those 12 hours) and eight hours per day on weekends (being open to the public four of those eight hours), 52 weeks per year providing customer service to the public and administrative support to the Enforcement and Pound Keeping areas. There are three full time operations clerks, two full time clerk receptionists a full time program development officer and a full time day dispatcher reporting to one Supervisor.

Administration and Support Services is responsible for providing “at the counter” and “over the phone” customer service, animal intake and release, lost and found services, day shift dispatching, materials and supplies requisition, as well as the registration of Offence Notices with the Courts and maintaining the link to the publicly accessible “Pet Finder” database. Administration and Support Services is also responsible for maintaining detailed records under Section 20 of the **Pounds Act** respecting animals surrendered by their owners and stray animals brought in to the shelter by Animal Control Officers and by members of the public.

In addition to the foregoing, Administration and Support Services also performs all the administrative functions associated with the Dog Licensing program (which includes mailing reminders and past due notices and trouble-shooting errors in the dog license database). Currently, there are over 36,000 dog licences processed every year and it is staff’s hope to increase that number to 50,000 dog licenses, over the next five years. As of 2008, some 14,000 of those licenses were processed by the clerk receptionists. It should be noted, that with the current levels of staffing, increasing the number of licensed dogs
will not be possible, since there are insufficient staff to process more than the current number of licenses.

Regulation 23 under the Animals for Research Act requires that the shelter must normally remain open for six days of every week, and staff must be available to, among other things, attend to and assist customers looking for their animals, to accept payments for services, to process animals being released to their owners or to adoption agencies and to maintain the records required therefor. In order to accommodate the administrative staffing deficit and to meet the operating requirements of the Animals for Research Act, staff recommends that Council approve the addition of .66 FTE to the Animal Control staff complement.

At present Animal Control is “gapping” .34 of an FTE which remained vacant after the transfer of staff resources from Animal Control to the Customer Contact Centre. Additionally, due to a levelling of enforcement workload, 1 FTE can now be made available by reducing the number of Animal Control Officers from 13 to 12. The subject Officer position was originally created by a reorganization of the Animal Control Section in 2006 to accommodate the anticipated increase in enforcement demand as a result of the then newly implemented “Pit Bull Ban” under the Dog Owner’s Liability Act (please see Report No. PED06011). Since that time, the number of Pit Bull related complaints has decreased and, correspondingly, the pressure on the enforcement component of the Animal Control section has subsided to a level where 12 Officers will be adequate to maintain current service levels.

Since the positions being created have lower wage rates and benefit costs than the soon to be deleted Animal Control Officer position and the gapped Dispatcher position, the additional .66 FTE will require no additional funding not already available in the 2009 Animal Control Budget, (see Financial Implications). By further reorganizing the clerical, customer service and dispatching workloads, approval of the requested .66 FTE will result in the Section being able to maintain the existing extended hours of operation, which the public has learned to expect as “normal”.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:

Council might approve the previously recommended additional 1.5 FTE in order to maintain the current operating hours for the Customer Service Counter at the Dartnall Road Animal Control facility without decreasing the number of Animal Control Officers.

Council might also elect to approve a decrease in the hours of operation for the Customer Service Counter at the Animal Control facility from 10 hours on weekdays and four hours on Saturday and Sunday to eight hours on weekdays and four hours on Saturday, i.e., from 9:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, to 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. on Saturday.

FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications: The recommendation will better manage overtime costs such that overtime will only be required as a result of staff absences (e.g. illness, injury, vacation,
etc.) as opposed to also covering extended service hours. Funding for the existing 1.34 FTE is included in the 2009 budget and the 2010 budget estimates. The difference in costs between the subject 1.34 FTE at the Officer and Dispatcher Rates and the proposed 2 Clerical FTE is in the order of $11,700 per annum, which difference would be funded through overtime savings. Equipment and Materials would be shared with existing staff and, therefore, no financial implications are anticipated respecting these matters.

**Staffing Implications:** None, save for the supplementing of front line clerical staff.

**Legal Implications:** None, since customer service operations will continue to be maintained in accordance with the Animals for Research Act.

**POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:**

N/A

**RELEVANT CONSULTATION:**

N/A

**CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:**

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

- **Community Well-Being is enhanced.** ☑️ Yes  □ No

  An efficient and effective animal control program contributes directly to the health, safety and well being of the Community

- **Environmental Well-Being is enhanced.** ☑️ Yes  □ No

  An efficient and effective animal control program contributes directly to the health, safety and well being of the Community

- **Economic Well-Being is enhanced.** ☑️ Yes  □ No

  An efficient and effective animal control program contributes directly to the health, safety and well being of the Community

**Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines?**

☐ Yes  ☑️ No

**Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants?**

☑️ Yes  ☑️ Not Applicable

Maintaining the customer counter operating hours by approving the requested .66 FTE and reorganizing the operation will provide for a more stable operation for administrative support staff.

MBH/PDB/dt