

# STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

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DATE: November 26, 2021

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: Adam Davey, Director of Public Safety

SUBJECT: Bylaw Services: 2021 Year-End Review

ATTACHMENT(S): Power Point Presentation

## RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Council RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report dated November 26, 2021 from the Director of Public Safety titled "Bylaw Services: 2021 Year-End Review".

## PURPOSE:

To provide Mayor and Council with an overview of the good work that has been done over the previous year by all the members of the Bylaw Services Team. This report will demonstrate some of the positive results that have been achieved through the efforts of the officers to gain compliance without having to elevate to Council's level. This report will highlight some of the "good news stories" that come from the day-to-day work of Prince George Bylaw Officers.

## BACKGROUND:

Since January 2021, Bylaw Services has experienced a number of changes. The number of Bylaw Officers in the division has gone from 17 to 21, the hours of service have expanded from 10 hours a day to 16 hours a day and for the first time in many years the entire department, which includes Animal Control, Parking Control and Bylaw Enforcement are all housed under the roof of City Hall. The reallocation of funds earlier in the year was used to double the size of the Downtown Team. This team has a leading role in the management of all issues in the downtown as well as in security of downtown City facilities.

## DOWNTOWN BYLAW TEAM:

- The Downtown Team regularly patrols through the downtown on foot stopping to engage with business owners as well as marginalized individuals. As a result of the relationships that have been built with people in the downtown the RCMP have recognized the value of liaising with Bylaws when it comes time to look for individuals that have been reported missing. **Since its inception in June, 2021 the Downtown Bylaw Team has located 4 missing individuals.**
- In August 2021, members of the Downtown Team were called to a camp in a wooded area outside of the downtown. They located a very elaborate camp that was occupied by an older male, who relocated to the Lower Patricia encampment. Approximately two weeks later the same bylaw officers were approached by a female who had travelled from the United

States to attempt to locate her father, as she was very worried about him. She was assisted in getting to the encampment and coincidentally her father was the same man who had just moved in from the wooded area. Both parties were very grateful to Bylaw Services.

- The Downtown Bylaw Officers interact with numerous local social agencies as a result of networking at the Community Safety Hub. As a result, the downtown team made a referral to the RCMP-led Situation Table. The individual had been on the streets for approximately 2 years but was never willing to accept assistance. Due to the daily visits from bylaw and the resulting rapport, the individual accepted the intervention of the Situation Table team. This team consisted of Bylaw Services, Central Interior Native Health and BC Housing. The individual is now housed and receiving assistance.
- In September, 2021 Bylaw Officers were approached in relation to some property that was stolen from a masonry company located in downtown Prince George. Although property crime is a policing and not bylaws matter, he provided the Bylaw Officers with a description as well as a photo of what was stolen. During their patrols officers located an individual using the equipment to transport their belongings to the Lower Patricia Encampment. The item was returned to the masonry company.

#### SAFE STREETS BYLAW:

- On August 31, 2021, Council passed the Safe Streets Bylaw. This new bylaw borrowed from other existing pieces of legislation such as the *Provincial Safer Streets Act* and the local Highways Bylaw, in addition to similar Bylaws found in Abbotsford, Maple Ridge and Nanaimo. The intent of the bylaw is to regulate and define some of the behaviors that are not acceptable within the boundaries of the City of Prince George, in particular the larger downtown area. This provides Bylaw Officers with a tool to use to work with stakeholders in education and gaining compliance. To date no tickets have been issued under this bylaw. The first 6 months of this new bylaw intended to highlight education, in future, escalation up to and including ticketing may occur, to ensure compliance is achieved.
- **Since September 1, 2021 there have been 345 complaints made under the Safe Streets Bylaw.**

#### ANIMAL CONTROL:

- Animal Control spends time attempting to reunite lost pets with their owners. In one instance a family requested assistance after looking for 5 days. After a reported sighting on the south side of the Fraser River, Animal Control was able to assist in setting a trap for the dog (complete with treats). The strategy was successful and the dog was trapped during the night. Animal Control attended first thing the following morning and rescued the dog. He was reunited with his family in very short order.
- In August, 2021 Animal Control was able to assist a local animal rescue in locating and returning a dog that had recently had one of his legs amputated. This dog had managed to get away from his foster and had run into a nearby culvert and hid. The Animal Control Officer was able to coax the dog out of the culvert with treats and then safely return the animal so post-surgical care could resume.

#### BYLAW ENFORCEMENT:

**Since January 2021, Bylaw Services had dealt with 743 Unsightly Property Complaints. Of these complaints, only 3 were required to be brought before Council. All 3 have since complied, and the files are closed.**

- In April 2021 a property on Spruce Street was reported to have a large accumulation of debris in the back yard. There were also allegations that the occupants of the house had become engaged in illegal drug activity which was resulting in additional nuisance activity on the property. Bylaw Officers began working with the occupants with negative results. They then began the Nuisance and Abatement process with the property owner. After working with him for just over 2 months, the property was cleaned and the nuisance tenants were evicted.
- A complaint was received about a property on Norwood Street in relation to the Property Maintenance Bylaw. This property had a badly damaged fence, an overgrown lawn, a derelict vehicle as well as a derelict boat. Bylaw officers attended and discovered that the property was a rental and the tenant was an elderly man who had neither the means nor ability to clean up the property. The Bylaw Officer was able to engage with the property owner who did not live in the city and was not aware that the property had declined to the extent it had. The property owner was able to hire a local company to do the cleanup as well as remove the derelict vehicle, boat and fence.
- A complaint of an unsightly property was received in relation to a property on 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue. This property had a tremendous amount of debris that had accumulated in the back yard. Because of the presence of an old dilapidated shed it had also attracted a number of homeless people who were living in the shed. The Bylaw Officer in charge of this file was able to work with the property owner and lay out what exactly needed to be done. All of this information was provided in a First Notice under the authority of the Community Charter. Although compliance was not gained right away, once an Order was issued the property owner completely cleared the entire yard with a bulldozer.
- In June, 2021 a complaint of an unsightly property was received on Lorne Cres. The lawn was overgrown and debris in the form of old couches had been dumped on the lawn. Bylaw Officers were quickly able to locate the owner who was unaware of the issue. Once the owner became aware, compliance was achieved within two weeks.
- Also in June, 2020 a long grass complaint was received in relation to a residence on Freeman St. This was a situation where the landlord was responsible to cut the grass but the tenant had not communicated with him. By way of a few phone calls Bylaw Officers were able to gain compliance within 2 days and make the complaining neighbors much happier.

#### PARKING CONTROL:

- In September, 2021 contactless parking was introduced in all of the surface, hourly/daily parking lots in downtown Prince George. This gave patrons an additional option when paying for parking. It allowed people to pay for their parking from their cars rather than walk to and touch a pay station. This was of particular importance for those with Covid-19 concerns and also with personal safety concerns as a result of the downtown landscape. In the months of September, October and November usage increased which translated into increased revenue for the city of Prince George. The hope is to increase the usage of this parking app in the coming months. Downtown Prince George is actively engaged on this as well.
- **Since January 1, 2021 Parking Control Officers have issued 3811 parking tickets.**

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

Bylaw Services has had a very busy year and has been thrown into the spotlight as a result of many complex issues facing the City of Prince George. It is a solid team that is dedicated every day to

improving the quality of life throughout Prince George. On behalf of the entire department thank you to the Mayor and Council for all of the support we have received throughout the year.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

**Adam Davey, Director, Public safety**

PREPARED BY: [Charlotte Peters, Manager, Bylaw services]

APPROVED:

**Walter Babicz, City Manager**

Meeting Date: [2021/12/06]