RECOMMENDATIONS

The Director of Development Services recommends:

**THAT** Report No. DEV 2018-24 re: Dog Control By-law be received.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Dog Control By-law Report is to address the need for a new and updated By-law that deals with controlling and regulating dogs within the Town of Gravenhurst.

BACKGROUND

In 2017 with Council approval, By-law staff took over contracted dog services in the Town that previously were the responsibility of the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. By-law staff are now responsible for all dog issues including licensing, control of dogs, nuisance dogs, kennels and dog attacks in combination with the Police. With over a year of providing full dog control services, By-law staff are of the opinion that the current Dog Control By-law is inadequate from an enforceability standpoint, quite dated and in need of substantial clean up.

As a result, staff have developed a new Dog Control By-law that will better equip the Division to deal with all dog occurrences on a routine basis. In addition, the By-law has been enhanced from the original 1987 version that has numerous amendments to deliver a more consistent enforcement model and emphasizes better customer service.

ANALYSIS

In-depth research and consultation with surrounding Municipalities has been used to help build a Dog Control By-law that deals with local issues and current tendencies. Utilizing past occurrences, enforcement trends, recommendations from other industry experts and staff's
historical experience, the new By-law is focused on dealing with issues the Town is more likely to encounter. In addition, the proposed By-law is equipped to deal with a variety of common concerns encountered in other Municipalities, and has followed industry standards to ensure we're prepared should they occur in the Town of Gravenhurst.

The essence and goal of the proposed By-law is to protect residents and the community through regulating how dogs are controlled. The philosophy of the By-law holds dog owners accountable for their pets through 3 main components of the By-law: licensing, general prohibitions and classifying and controlling dangerous dogs.

**Licensing:**

Similar to the current By-law (but with updated terminology), all dogs within the Town must have a current valid dog tag affixed to them. The tag is purchased from the Town (or authorized agent) annually and is used to identify the dog’s owner if they are found at large so they can be taken home instead of to the Orillia O.S.P.C.A.

A noticeable change with the new By-law regulates how dogs are released to their owners. When a dog has been found at large without a tag that has been brought to the Orillia O.S.P.C.A., the owner must receive a “Canine Release Form”. The form is provided by the By-law Division and authorizes the O.S.P.C.A. to release the dog. This process will ensure dog owners are held accountable for their dogs and will give the By-law Division the ability to identify the owner, provide a degree of education, issue a dog tag, document patterns of behaviour and lay an appropriate charge if necessary.

**General Prohibitions:**

The regulations used in the new By-law are similar to what was used previously and follow typical industry standards. Comparable to neighbouring Municipalities, the By-law works to control dogs by holding owners accountable for their dog’s actions.

The primary changes to this section involve improved wording that will maximize the effectiveness of the By-law. The new wording gives a more clear interpretation of the intent of the By-law and works to deter irresponsible dog ownership. Another evident change is the number of dogs allowed per household. Previously a maximum of 2 dogs per household were allowed in Ward 1, while 3 dogs were allowed anywhere else in the Town. For the sake of consistency, the new By-law allows 3 dogs per household (all must have dog tags) throughout the entire Town. This change was made as the By-law Division has commonly found 3 dogs per household and there does not appear to be strong reasons to maintain the 2 dog limit.
Dangerous Dogs:

The most significant change from the current Dog Control By-law is how dangerous dogs are identified and dealt with. The current By-law does not speak to categorizing dogs with dangerous or aggressive tendencies and inadequately deals with the consequences of a dog attack. Under the new By-law, a dangerous dog is defined as any dog that: *has killed a person or domestic animal, regardless of circumstances; has bitten or injured a person or domestic animal in absence of any mitigating factor; has shown the disposition or tendency to be threatening or aggressive; has been declared dangerous in another Municipality.* Once this information has been obtained, the By-law Division has the ability to declare a dog dangerous by following very specific criteria and from that can serve a Notice to Muzzle to the dog owner where deemed necessary. The Notice to Muzzle has very clear requirements that must be adhered to and the By-law speaks to consequences for failure to comply.

The dangerous dog portion of the By-law is crucial for staff to deal with these situations in an appropriate manner that will protect the community from further occurrences. This portion of the proposed By-law works to distinguish the difference between normal dog behaviour that can be dealt with by correcting dog owner’s conduct versus aggressive and/or dangerous dog behaviours that needs be treated accordingly.

CONSULTATION

The following individuals / community groups were consulted:

- Chief Building Official

CORPORATE FINANCIAL IMPACT

No revenue implications known to exist with the suggested draft By-law.

COMMUNICATIONS

In preparation of this Report, staff has advertised the request for public input and/or suggestions through the Town’s website.

FUTURE CONSULTATIONS

Subject to the approval of the new By-law, media releases, notifications and announcements would be utilized to communicate changes to the public and agencies that would be affected. In addition, educational material would be updated.
CONCLUSIONS

It is concluded that the By-law will help allow staff to better deal with dog occurrences, improve customer service and should be approved.

RELATION TO STRATEGIC PLAN

This Report advances and supports the following elements of the Town of Gravenhurst Strategic Plan by:

Goal 5: Provide Better Municipal Service
  5A: Exceptional municipal customer service

The proposed change means minimal community disruption and provides better municipal services by giving the public a safer environment.

RELATION TO OTHER MUNICIPAL REPORTS, PLANS OR APPLICABLE LEGISLATION

This Report does not directly relate to other municipal reports, plans or applicable legislation.

ATTACHMENTS - nil

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY:

Author: Dustin Gronc, Manager of By-Law Services
Approved by: Scott Lucas, Director of Development Services
Approved by: Glen Davies, Chief Administrative Officer