

Subject: Public Works Tree Maintenance Policy S802-01**Recommendation:**

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receive Report #2021-0159;

AND THAT Council approve the proposed Public Works Tree Maintenance Policy S802-01;

AND THAT Council direct staff to become founding members and collaborative partners with the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre's Greening the Landscape Research Consortium in 2022;

AND THAT Council direct staff to explore the option of delegating the authority to the Niagara Region to enforce the Regional Municipal By-law No. 2020-79 on properties less than one (1) hectare in the Town of Pelham.

Background:

On July 26th, 2021 Council referred Public Works report #2021-0128 back to staff to review and consider the information provided by the Pelham Tree Conservation Society (PTCS), and provide a cost breakdown with respect to their recommendations. This report serves to summarize the cost breakdown of increasing the level of service recommended by the PTCS as well as the policy improvements made in collaboration with the group.

Analysis:

Town of Pelham staff and members of the PTCS met on two occasions during the month of August to discuss the recommendations laid out in the group's response to the Town of Pelham Tree Maintenance Policy (Appendix A). The meetings were productive and led to a number of policy changes and improvements. The revised Tree Maintenance Policy S802-01 has been attached as (Appendix B).

Through meaningful dialog Staff and the PTCS worked to improve a number of sections within the policy. For example, the expansion of the tree canopy has been added to the Policy Statement as it relates to the tree replacement requirements.

Section 4.7 under General Provisions was added with the requirement that staff send an annual report to Council outlining tree works completed by the Public Works Department to improve transparency.

While there were a lot of areas of agreement, some compromises were required. The PTCS proposed that a Public Forestry Advisory Group be created to oversee sections 4.4 to 4.6 and any other issues with respect to trees on municipal property. The care and maintenance of municipal assets, including trees is a staff function, and such is carried out by appropriately qualified people, charged by the municipality to do so. These qualified people can be internal staff or third party contractors retained by the Town through the annual tree maintenance and tree planting projects. Staff do support the creation of a Volunteer Forestry Advisory Group with the purpose to promote the environmental benefit, as well as the proper care and maintenance of trees and forests within the Town of Pelham. That being said, Public Works staff are stretched thin and a staff appointment to a forestry advisory committee would place additional stress on the department.

The PTCS proposed an increase in the level of service with regards to pruning and inspection of boulevard trees from the seven (7) year cycle proposed in the policy to a three (3) to five (5) year cycle. Staff are not recommending this course of action; however, Council may decide to go forward with the increase in service level that would come at an operating cost increase.

Increasing the service level by shortening the pruning cycle will require additional budget allocation. A change from a seven (7) year to a five (5) year inspection and pruning cycle will require Beautification Operating budget increases of \$32,000 or 25% in contracted services, and an additional \$120,000 for a full time arborist and two (2) seasonal staff for seven months each year. In order to meet this service level capital investment will need to be made with respect to fleet and equipment. In addition, to the costs for labour and contracted services the department also requires \$300,000 in fleet capital that includes a forestry bucket truck, pick-up truck and a wood chipper. The maintenance and operation of this equipment also requires an estimated \$29,000 in the fleet operation budget. In summary, a change from a seven (7) year inspection and pruning cycle to a five (5) year pruning cycle will require an operating budget increase of approximately \$180,000 per year (including maintenance costs) as well as a capital investment of approximately \$300,000. Further, there is no capacity at the Operations Centre to accommodate the increase in staff or equipment.

The PTCS proposed a formula based tree replacement schedule for tree removals, where the number of trees replaced (TR) equaled the diameter of the removed tree (DRT) divided by the diameter of the nursery stock (DNS) or $TR = DRT/DNS$. Using

this formula, the removal of a typical large silver maple tree with a diameter of 1m, would require the replanting of twenty (20) 50mm trees. 50mm is the typical size of nursery stock used for replacements. The cost of supply and planting one (1) 50mm tree ranges from \$400 to \$750 depending on stock availability, species and contract price through the competitive bid process. The replanting of trees resulting from the removal of one large diameter tree could cost as much as \$15,000. The existing tree replacement budget is \$25,000.

In order to address the concerns of the number of trees being replanted, Staff have increased the number based on a sliding scale. Staff propose that two (2) trees be replanted for every tree removed up to 400mm in diameter, three (3) trees be replanted for every tree removed between 400mm and 900mm in diameter and four (4) trees be replanted for every tree removed over 900mm. The number of trees removed year over year is highly variable as it is based on tree health and condition; however, Staff estimate that this schedule will require a modest increase of \$7,500 in the tree replacement budget.

Through Public Works Report #2021-0128 Staff recommended that the Town of Pelham become collaborative partners with the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre's Research Consortium in 2022, and continue to explore the option of delegating the authority to the Niagara Region to enforce Regional By-Law No. 2020-79. Staff continue to recommend these items as previously reported.

Financial Considerations:

Depending upon Council's preferences, it is entirely possible to spend more money to increase the level of service for the protection and maintenance of the municipal tree canopy and increase planting of trees on municipal property. Any proposed increases to spending in this area should be referred to the 2022 operating and capital budgets.

As per Public Works Report #2021-0128, becoming a founding member and collaborative partner with the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre's Greening the Landscape Research Consortium has a cost of \$5,000 per year with a 3-year Commitment.

Delegating the authority to the Niagara Region to enforce the Regional By-Law No. 2020-79 has no additional costs to the Municipality.

As per Public Works Report #2021-0128, an additional seasonal staff member to complete the tree inspection and inventory, and assist with tree pruning and

maintenance is estimated at \$15,000 annually. This is based on a seven (7) year inspection and pruning cycle.

As per Public Works Report #2021-0128, determining the tree canopy cover percentage within the urban boundary is estimated at \$7,000.

Increasing the tree replacement requirement based on the schedule set out in the proposed Tree Maintenance Policy is estimated at \$7,500.

Based on the attached Tree Maintenance Policy the proposed increases to the 2022 operating budget is estimated at \$34,500.

Alternatives Reviewed:

No alternatives were considered in the preparation of this report.

Strategic Plan Relationship: Strong Organization

The tree canopy within the municipal boundary is vital to the high quality of life within the Town of Pelham

Consultation:

The Pelham Tree Conservation Society, the Supervisor of Beautification, the Town's Arborist, the Manager of Public Works, and the Director of Public Works all contributed to the improvements in the proposed Tree Management Policy.

Other Pertinent Reports/Attachments:

Appendix A – PTCS Letter in response to the Tree Maintenance Policy

Appendix B – Tree Maintenance Policy S802-01

Public Works Report #2021-0097 June 7, 2021

Public Works Report #2021-0128 July 26, 2021

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