

**Subject:** Status of Fees and Charges Update**Recommendation:**

**THAT Council receive Report #2024-0227 – Status of Fees and Charges Update, for information;**

**AND THAT Council direct staff, following completion of the fee review by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., to provide a further report making recommendations for fees and charges to be imposed by the Town.**

**Background:**

The Fees and Charges By-law is reviewed annually by staff and updated as necessary to ensure that amounts charged by the Town are appropriate. In addition, the Town has retained Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. to review Recreation, Planning and Engineering fees. That review is expected to be completed by the end of the year for Recreation and in the first quarter of 2025 for Planning and Engineering. In the interim, this report will provide an update on staff work in this area.

**Analysis:**

The Town has authority to impose fees and charges for services or activities it provides and for the use of Town property. The annual User Fees and Charges guide sets out the fees charged by Town departments for various services, which generally reflect administrative and financial costs incurred by the Town to provide them.

The Community Planning & Development Services department fee schedule includes items such as development, official plan, zoning by-law, site plan and subdivision applications and various building permits. The Public Works department fee schedule includes engineering items such as culverts, various permit reviews and development inspections. Per recent legislation changes Watson & Associates are completing a time study and fee review for performing engineering intake and reviews for Consolidated Linear Infrastructure and Environmental Compliance approvals. These submissions are related to engineering approvals for new development applications specifically related to water and wastewater connections and infrastructure.

As noted above, Watson & Associates is currently reviewing Planning and Engineering fees and charges. This detailed review is taking some time to complete as it includes time and resources for each development application and permit. The full review of the Community Planning & Development Services and Public Works fee schedules will be completed in the first quarter of 2025. Only minor changes in these fees and charges will be included in the 2025 User Fees and Charges By-law coming to Council for approval on December 18, 2024.

In addition, Public Works staff have recently completed an analysis of the Town's rates for cemetery operations. Research results suggest that the Town is undervaluing the fees for these services resulting in less than full cost recovery. Public Works staff are preparing a report for Council's consideration regarding the current rates and new proposed rates. It is anticipated that this report will appear on a November agenda.

The Fire & By-law Services department fee schedule includes items such as fire route applications, fire inspections, burn and fireworks permits, and fire department calls to emergency situations. For motor vehicle collision attendance, fees are generally based on rates set by the provincial Ministry of Transportation (MTO). The MTO has not yet published its rates for 2025, but they will be referenced by the Town when available.

All other departments have reviewed their fee schedules and have provided input on any changes to be presented to Council for consideration in due course.

One further item that Council may wish to consider is whether the Town should have different rates for residents and non-residents. This would apply primarily to activity rates charged by the Recreation, Culture and Wellness department, although it could also apply to cemetery fees and emergency response fees.

The Town has legal authority to pass a fees and charges by-law that differentiates on any basis the Town considers appropriate, provided that the by-law is not discriminatory under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* or the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. Prohibited grounds of discrimination include citizenship and place of origin. However, neither of these is the same as place of residence, which is not a prohibited ground of discrimination. As a result, the Town is able to impose different fees on residents and non-residents for services provided by the Town or the use of Town property, although in all circumstances there must be a reasonable connection between the cost of the service provided and the amount charged by the Town.

Should Council wish to explore the possibility of resident and non-resident rates, staff will include further information and recommendations in the report to be provided after the Watson & Associates fee review is complete.

**Financial Considerations:**

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

**Alternatives Reviewed:**

None as this report is for information only.

**Strategic Plan Relationship: Financial Health**

Setting appropriate fees and charges supports the financial health of the Town.

**Consultation:**

The Senior Leadership Team was consulted in the preparation of this report.

**Other Pertinent Reports/Attachments:**

None.

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