



The Corporation of the City of Cornwall
Regular Meeting of Council
Report

Department: Fire Services
Division: Fire
Report Number: 2020-216-Fire Services
Prepared By: Pierre Voisine, Fire Chief
Meeting Date: February 10, 2020
Subject: Open-Air Fire public consultation report

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with data from the public consultation activities, and the responses from other municipalities, as requested by Council.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive this report and approve the proposed By-law to cease the practice of Open-Air burning in the City of Cornwall, draft By-law provided at APPENDIX E.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications to this report.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY IMPLICATIONS

This strategy is directly in line with the City's Mission Statement of providing services that enable a financially and environmentally sustainable community which will care and provide for the needs and values of its residents.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

During the Council meeting held on September 9, 2019, Council approved a report (at APPENDIX F) to rescind By-law 2014-063 and replace it with an updated By-law which ceases the practice of Open-Air Burning, but allowed for the use of fuel based appliances in the City of Cornwall.

Due to significant comments and feedback within the community, a special meeting was held on September 16th 2019, where council passed a motion to direct Administration to conduct public engagement on this issue and to provide education prior to returning the Open-Air Burning By-law to Council for adoption.

Survey

The City undertook a varied approach in acquiring the requested data. First, several questions were established to provide council with the resident's general position on this issue. Additional questions were developed to help council understand the issues surrounding the issues related to the previous By-law and the practice of Open-Air burning. These questions were then presented in survey form, and posted for a period of 11 days, September 30th 2019 to October 10th 2019.

Validating the submissions gathered during the on-line format prove to be somewhat challenging. Some respondents chose not to reveal addresses or provided invalid locations. Though we collect IP addresses through the survey, searching their origins is not simple as it generally defaults to the internet provider. It was not possible for the City to positively identify the location of each respondent, without engaging the internet providers, which is both costly and time consuming.

The results of the survey are included in this report at Appendix A, the following summary outlines some of the data points:

- A total of 1779 responses to the questionnaire were received, either through the on-line survey, or from the public consultation meetings.
- 1511 respondents indicated that they believe that residents should be allowed to burn wood-based fires in the City of Cornwall; 241 opposed open-air burning, while 22 respondents were unsure. 7 respondents skipped the question;
- 573 respondents indicated they currently have a backyard fire pit at their home;
- 452 respondents either currently have or previously had an Open-Air Burn permit, while 1300 indicated they have never acquired a permit;

- 2221 responses received indicated concerns about residents burning materials other than cured wood (respondents could vote for more than one answer);
- 1441 respondents believe there are Cornwall residents burning without permits;
- 536 respondents believe the penalty should increase, while 341 respondents want to decrease the fine. 862 respondents believe the penalty should remain the same;
- 285 respondents are concerned with climate change and air quality;
- 306 respondents are concerned with possible health impacts of wood smoke to them or their families, while 1378 respondents indicated this was not a concern.

The survey also provided opportunity for respondents to provide comments specific to how the City could continue providing permits to residents with neighbours with medical conditions. These comments are included in Appendix B

Public Education Sessions

Two public information sessions were scheduled to engage with the public in order to educate attendees of the items contained in the original report to Council and clarify some of reason which led its creation. During these sessions, a representative of the Office of the Fire Marshall was invited provide information about the Fire Code, and to answer questions regarding legislative components of Open-Air Burning. The survey and sessions were advertised through the City bulletin, on the City's social media pages and through the Standard Freeholder. Attendees of the public information sessions were asked to respond to a physical version of the survey questions, which was made available for those who may not have accessed the on-line version of the survey. The results of the open sessions are included in the survey results at Appendix A.

Unsolicited inputs

Throughout the process, the City received several letters and emails from residents providing their input in an unsolicited fashion. Only those which have been received by or forwarded to the Fire Chief have been included in this report. Appendix C provides copies of these communications for Council's review. The personal identification information of those who have written to Council has been with-held.

Review of Municipal By-laws

We have provided additional information in APPENDIX D to help understand how other municipalities address By-laws on the subject. It is important to note that many municipalities have implemented a variety of different by-laws to address individual types of fires such as campfires, or recreational fires, burn barrel fires, or even Open-Air fires for clearing purposes.

Though many municipalities have a permit system to allow Open-Air burning to occur on its territory, it is generally, with some exceptions, limited to the more rural¹ portion of the municipality. Other municipalities have addressed this through increased separation distances between properties. However, it is important to note that in the City of Cornwall, 98% of structures are within the Urban Settlement Boundary.

The appendix also contains some responses from other municipal Fire Officials.

¹ Statistics Canada defines urban areas using the same methodology based on population size and density from the 1971 Census through to the 2006 Census. An 'urban area' was defined as having a population of at least 1,000 and a density of 400 or more people per square kilometer.

Document Title:	Open-Air By-Law Public Consultation Results - 2020-216-Fire Services.docx
Attachments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- APPENDIX A Survey Results.pdf- APPENDIX B Question 17 answers.pdf- APPENDIX C Unsolicited Inputs.pdf- APPENDIX D Municipal review.pdf- APPENDIX E -Prohibited Open Air Bylaw.pdf- APPENDIX F -Report - Open Air Burning.html
Final Approval Date:	Feb 3, 2020

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Maureen Adams - Feb 3, 2020 - 2:54 PM