




TO: GENERAL COMMITTEE

FROM: G. ALLISON, DIRECTOR OF BUILDING AND BY-LAW SERVICES

PREPARED BY: J. FORGRAVE, SUPERVISOR OF BY-LAW SERVICES 

**NOTED: P. ELLIOTT-SPENCER, MBA, CPA, CMA
GENERAL MANAGER OF COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE SERVICES** 
C. LADD, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER 

RE: EXOTIC ANIMAL ACTS IN A CIRCUS - COMMUNITY SUGGESTION

DATE: APRIL 18, 2016

This memorandum is prepared in response to a suggestion submitted by members of the public through the City of Barrie's online suggestion forum. The submitted suggestion is to not allow the use of Exotic Animal Acts in Circuses performing in Barrie. The suggestion obtained enough support from Barrie residents to have staff investigate its viability.

Current Status

City of Barrie Animal Control By-law 2010-035 as amended prohibits the keeping of specific exotic animals as defined and listed in the By-law, however this provision does not apply to "circuses" or a municipally sanctioned event. Further, City of Barrie Licensing By-law 2006-266 as amended requires that a Circus or "similar show" obtain a City of Barrie business licence which outlines conditions for the operation of such an event.

Online Suggestion Comments

Resident comments in the suggestion forum want Barrie to join other municipalities worldwide and "ban" exotic animal acts as part of a circus. The expressed concerns for this prohibition include;

- the abuse and exploitation of these animals for profit is outrageous
- the acts are unnatural, painful and stressful
- the trainers use inhumane methods to have the animal(s) learn and perform
- the animals endure severe confinement, hardship and brutality and housed in poor conditions
- the animals used can be dangerous to the public

Historical Reference

The City licences on average one Circus per year, including the Shrine Circus in 2015, with the event held on private property. Upon issuance of the licence there are a number of conditions imposed on the licensee to ensure that the safety and welfare of the animals and safety of the public is maintained at all times. Examples include unencumbered access to Municipal Law Enforcement staff and Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) Inspectors, liability insurance etc.

To date, no complaints have been received by the By-law Services Branch related to these events. Further, the Investigations Branch of the OSPCA was consulted regarding their inspection processes and provided the following "If we are aware of any circus using animals an Investigations Agent would

normally check on the conditions at the event. Of course, should we hear of any concerns from the public an investigation would be launched.”

Comparative Municipalities

Staff are currently aware of four of Barrie's comparator municipalities who permit the keeping exotic animals for the purposes of a circus or similar show under a licence issued by the municipality as Barrie does. Those municipalities are Windsor, Kitchener, London and Orillia.

Four municipalities permit the keeping exotic animals for the purposes of a circus or similar show with an exemption to the By-law or prior Council approval. Those municipalities are Bracebridge, Huntsville, Guelph and Niagara Falls.

Three municipalities currently do not have regulations regarding the keeping of exotic animals however may be reviewing that in the future. These include Parry Sound, Bradford and Kingston.

Suggestion Implementation

To implement this suggestion an amendment to the Animal Control By-law 2010-035 and to the Licensing By-law 2006-266 would be required and a review of possible impacts on By-law Services would need to be taken. This will include staffing needs, costs associated with enforcement, what measure of enforcement may be needed and possible revenue reductions. Community and Service Groups who sponsor circuses to raise funds for community projects should also be consulted.

If Council wishes to investigate the viability of this suggestion further, they could refer this matter to staff to obtain additional information and comments from residents to formulate a recommendation to Council in the context of regulatory parameters and costs.