



## **Planning, Building and By-law Services**

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**Prepared for: Council-in-Committee**

**Report: PBBS-37-2025**

**Meeting Date: May 12, 2024**

### **1. Title**

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Animal Care and Control Services Award of Contract

### **2. Recommendations**

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**That:** Council accepts and approves the proposal by the Lincoln County Humane Society (LCHS) operating as the Humane Society of Greater Niagara (HSGN) for Animal Care and Control Services for the Town of Fort Erie for a period of 3 years with an increase of 4.00% for the first year and 2.39% per year thereafter with an option to extend for an additional two, two-year periods.

**That:** Council approves the fees and charges proposed in Appendix 1 to Report PBBS-37-2025 and directs staff to prepare a by-law for Council approval.

### **3. Relation to Council's Corporate Strategic Plan**

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Priority: Not applicable

Initiative: Not applicable

### **4. List of Stakeholders**

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Members of the Public

Humane Society of Greater Niagara (formerly the Lincoln County Humane Society)

Town of Fort Erie Property Owners and Rate Payers

Town of Fort Erie SPCA

### **5. Purpose of Report**

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The Animal Care and Control Services Agreement between the Town of Fort Erie and the Lincoln County Humane Society, now known as the Greater Humane Society of Niagara (HSGN) is due to expire May 31, 2025. The purpose of this report is to seek Council authorization to award the contract for Animal Care and Control Services to the Humane Society of Greater Niagara. This agreement, if approved, will be for an initial contract period of three years, with an option to extend for an additional two, two-year periods, and will provide for the continuous delivery of Animal Care and Control Services for the Town of Fort Erie.

## 6. Analysis

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A Request for Proposal (RFP) PDS-25P-ANIMAL was issued on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025, pursuant to the Town's Purchasing Policy, for prospective proponents to submit proposals for Animal Care and Control Services.

Two proposals were submitted prior to the 2:00 pm March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2025, submission deadline. An Evaluation Committee comprised of the Chief Administrative Officer Chris McQueen and three approved representatives from Planning, Building and By-law Services reviewed the proposals. The Manager of Procurement and Finance oversaw the process. The evaluation occurred in four stages:

**Stage 1:** Proposal submissions were reviewed to determine compliance with the mandatory proposal submission requirements.

**Stage 2:** Proposals were evaluated based upon the criteria outlined in the Request for Proposal, which considered the proponents team's experience and qualifications, overall clarity and understanding of service requirements, services to be provided, and proposed work plan and schedule.

**Stage 3:** Financial proposals were considered from all qualified Proponents. This request for proposal was completed as a two-envelope system, which separates the technical proposal from the pricing proposal. Pricing proposals were evaluated independently from the technical evaluation to ensure procurement integrity and reduce the risk of pricing criteria unfairly influencing the evaluation process.

**Stage 4:** Following Stage 3, all scores from the previous stages were added together to determine the total score for each Proponent. The evaluation committee has recommended the highest ranked Proponent for Council consideration.

The evaluation scores for RFP PDS-22P-ANIMAL are summarized below:

Proponent	Technical Score	Financial Score	Total Score	Rank
Humane Society of Greater Niagara	64.93	9.08	74.00	1st
Fort Erie SPCA	53.86	10.00	63.86	2nd

The Evaluation Committee unanimously recommends that the Humane Society of Greater Niagara continue to provide Animal Care and Control Services for the Town of Fort Erie for an initial costing of \$154,187.28 for the first year with an annual increase of 2.39%, (excluding provisional items) for the following years. The proposal is considered complete, thorough and technically sound. The budget allocated for this contract for 2025 was \$153,000, and the associated costs with the proposal from the HSGN is inline with that amount.

If approved by Council, the Humane Society of Greater Niagara would continue to provide the following Animal Care and Control services to the Town as specifically identified and outlined in Appendix "D", of the Request for Proposal (RFP) PDS-25P-ANIMAL RFP agreement including but not limited to:

- Animal Control Services
- Pound Services
- Humane Services
- Licensing Services

### *Humane Society of Greater Niagara-*

Previously known as the Lincoln County Humane Society (LCHS), the Humane Society of Greater Niagara (HSGN) underwent an organizational name change in 2024 to reflect their growth within the Niagara Region. The Humane Society of Greater Niagara is a locally recognized authority on animal welfare issues and has strived to make a measurable difference in the lives of animals since 1881. The HSGN is an integral part of the community, promoting mutually beneficial human-animal interactions; they are viewed as a trusted and desirable organization for volunteerism and support.

In the Niagara Region, the HSGN has been providing Animal Care and Control Services to the local and surrounding communities for over 50 years. Their goal is to build awareness of the essential role of animals in our lives and to promote humane and respectful treatment of all animals, while strengthening the human-animal bond. The HSGN is committed to assisting animals in need, including homeless cats, dogs and other companion animals that are subjected to cruelty or neglect.

The HSGN also provides pound keeping services to several Municipalities in Niagara. Currently, the HSGN has contracts with the City of St. Catharines, Town of Grimsby, Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and the City of Thorold. Operation and maintenance of the HSGN and pound are in accordance with the Animals for Research Act, RSO. 1990, c. A.22, as amended and the associated regulations. Oversight regarding their compliance is administered by the Ontario Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

The HSGN is overseen by a Board of Directors who provide directional goals and the required resources to the Executive Director, to perform those tasks. The Executive Director carries out the day-to-day functions without hands on direction from the Board. The HSGN is subject to and complies with several pieces of legislation including, but not limited to:

- The Criminal Code,
- The Employment Standards Act,
- The Labour Relations Act,
- The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, including Regulations,
- The Occupational Health and Safety Act,
- The Human Rights Code,
- The Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act,
- The Pounds and the Animals for Research Act, and
- The Dog Owners' Liability Act.

The current facilities for the HSGN are located in St. Catharines and Thorold. The St. Catharines location is situated at 160 Fourth Avenue in the City of St. Catharines, on a two-acre property, that is visited by thousands of community members annually. The current shelter, 15,000 square feet, at capacity can house approximately 125 cats, 96 dogs and 25 small domestic animals with the added ability to utilize over a dozen partnering facilities as necessary, to facilitate care and

housing for additional animals. This facility is set to undergo a nearly \$1.5 million renovation, expanding the facility to accommodate the following: expanded reception and public viewing space, expanded cat adoption facilities, relocated and expanded animal isolation space, retrofitted whelping room (birthing room), upgraded laundry facilities, public grieving space and quiet room, new animal intake space for injured animals and wildlife containment, expanded small animal adoption facilities and a community room. During the time of this renovation, the HSGN Board of Directors approved outfitting of the HSGN's secondary building in Thorold to assist in the shelter operations.

The Thorold facility, situated at 2493 Hwy 20 in the City of Thorold, near the Welland border, was purchased in March 2022. This second location, which is central to Niagara, is an additional location for the HSGN to provide supplementary housing for animals can house approximately 30 cats and 40 dogs. As well, it will provide Animal Control, Humane Services, and adoptions to other Cities and Towns, including the Town of Fort Erie. This facility is set to undergo a nearly \$200,000 investment to transform the facility into a full-service Humane Society and veterinary clinic, increasing service availability across central Niagara.

The St. Catharines HSGN facility houses a fully accredited College of Veterinarians of Ontario Veterinary Clinic, with access to a team consisting of four Veterinarians, five Registered veterinary technicians, four animal care technicians, three booking coordinators and four receptionists. This full-service veterinary clinic is recognized as the first Humane Society-run clinic in Ontario. All injured and sick animals are treated by a veterinarian or under their supervision by a registered veterinary technician. To complement staff, the HSGN has over 200 volunteers within several programs to ensure the highest level of care is provided to all animals within their facilities. In addition to the Veterinary staff, the HSGN employs a dog behaviouralist who assesses the suitability of dogs prior to being placed for adoption. This ensures that dogs are being adopted into homes that will provide a suitable environment which in turn will reduce the likelihood of the dog being returned to the shelter.

The HSGN utilizes their seven animal control officers to investigate by-law complaints, conduct community patrols and respond to calls for animals in distress. Officers are outfitted in identifiable uniforms and are equipped with GPS tracking, two-way radios, animal handling tools, caging equipment and personal protective gear to safely manage a variety of situations. Officers are rigorously trained in animal handling, safety protocols and the enforcement of diverse By-law violations including but not limited to: dangerous dogs, noise, animal care, licensing, exotic animals and fecal removal.

The HSGN Executive Director, Cindy Dunne, started with the HSGN in December 2024. Mrs. Dunne has held several similar management positions with the Toronto Metropolitan University Ted Rogers School of Management; however, she took on the position of Executive Director with the HSGN as she was inspired by the dedication and passion of the staff and the work they do within the organization and the community.

The Evaluation Committee met with Cindy Dunne and Cortnie Welychka, Senior Manager of Operations during the evaluation phase for clarification on several items. Discussions were held surrounding proposed changes to the Animal Care and Control contract to ensure that the contract is mutually beneficial and ensures that residents in the Town of Fort Erie will have their concerns adequately addressed. The HSGN agrees to respond to complainants for humane-wildlife conflicts and provide humane traps to the residents where prevention strategies have been exhausted, not feasible or have been proven to be ineffective. Trapping will comply with all

applicable legislation and align with best practices as outlined by the HSGN. Further to this, the HSGN will continue to provide the “Free Ride Home” program for animals with valid and active license who have been located running at large from Monday-Saturday 8:30am-4:30pm. This program allows for Animal Control Officers to return the licensed animal found at large to the owners on a first offence as this has proven to build relationships within the community.

### *Animal Control User Fees*

Animal control fees were increased in 2016 to coincide with the beginning of the Animal Control contract term and were not increased again until 2024. The Town entered a contract with the Humane Society of Greater Niagara in 2022, for an initial term of 3 years. Towards the end of 2023, staff received a request from the HSGN to increase fees for animal licensing and impound services. Based on information supplied by HSGN, costs had risen significantly from 2017 to 2023. The Town subsidy associated with this contract increased by 2% per year over the initial term and therefore, staff supported a 2% increase in the fees retained by HSGN through this contract for both 2024 and 2025.

When the current 2025 Request for Proposal (“RFP”) was created, proposed user fees were included in the document so that proponents could estimate revenues generated through the contract as part of their bidding process. License fees and impound services do not sufficiently fund operations associated with the contract – they are factored into the overall pricing of the contract when determining the Town subsidy. Staff are now recommending that the proposed user fees be formally amended at the onset of the new agreement (i.e. June 2025) to be in line with the RFP, subject to Council approval.

Minimal changes have been proposed for license fees to avoid increasing financial pressure on pet owners and encourage compliance with licensing. These changes round fees to the nearest dollar, where applicable, and remain in line with those of comparable municipalities in the Region.

Larger changes are proposed for Poundkeeper services to increase cost recovery for services provided to specific users.

## **7. Financial, Staffing and Accessibility (AODA) Implications**

The proposal submitted by the Humane Society of Greater Niagara is recommended for the award of this contract, as the highest ranked proponent and meets all operational specifications of the Animal Care and Control RFP.

The projected costs for providing operations from Thorold with an annual term of June to May are summarized below:

<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>% Increase</b>
Year 1	\$154,187.28 *	4.00%
Year 2	\$157,872.36 *	2.39%
Year 3	\$161,645.14 *	2.39%
<b>Total Cost</b>	\$473,705.14 *	

(\*excluding provisional items)

The Town's solicitation included two provisional items. Provisional items are deliverables

described in the solicitation, which may be considered by the Town at the direction of Council. The two provisional items include;

- 1) A Registered Veterinary Technician be on staff
- 2) A staff member be on site at the facility 24 hours a day and 7 days a week

The costs associated to these provisional items were provided as part of the financial proponent of the HSGN submission as follows,

- 1) If a fulltime registered veterinary technician is required on site at the Thorold facility the cost would be an additional \$62,000.00 per contract year (3 years +2.39% increase per year). Should Council accept the services of a full time veterinary technician working out of the St. Catharines facility there would be no additional cost.
- 2) If Council requires that the Thorold facility be staffed 24/7 the cost would equate to an additional \$214,918.70 per contract year (3 years +2.39% increase per year). Should Council accept the staffing model already in effect at the Thorold facility there would be no additional cost.

## **8. Policies Affecting Proposal**

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The Town of Fort Erie Purchasing Policy By-law No. 02-10, identifies the required purchasing method for the tendering of goods, works and services. The Request for Proposal was issued in accordance with the Town of Fort Erie Purchasing By-law No. 02-10.

- The Humane Society of Greater Niagara is in a good position to provide Animal Control Services for the following reasons:
- The HSGN is financially sound, owning their buildings, equipment and vehicles.
- The HSGN continues to upgrade their facilities and equipment with a projected \$1.7 million in scheduled upgrades.
- The HSGN is a well-respected, longstanding organization well established in the Niagara Region with a proven record of success.
- Currently provides Animal Care and Control Services to similar sized communities in the Niagara Region.
- Access to a full-service Veterinary clinic with an experienced, dedicated team of professionals.
- Employs experienced staff, including Animal Care Technicians, Animal Control Officers, Senior Animal Care Technicians and Management Staff with a combined total of 143 years of cumulative experience, assisted by a large team of volunteers.

## **9. Comments from Departments, Community and Corporate Partners**

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The Humane Society of Greater Niagara believes in strong community engagement. As part of their proposal a list of Community Partners was made available that endorsed the professionalism, compassion and community mindedness of the HSGN. Submissions included;

- The City of St. Catharines,
- The City of Thorold,
- Community Care,
- Gillian's Place,

- Lancaster Chown and Welch LLP,
- Ottawa Humane Society, Humane Society London and Middlesex, Windsor / Essex County Humane Society, The Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo Stratford Perth

## **10. Alternatives**

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Council could choose to not award the contract to Humane Society of Greater Niagara, but this is not recommended since a proper procurement and RFP process were completed.

## **11. Communicating Results**

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A joint community notification of the RFP results would be recommended. Should Council accept staff recommendation, a media campaign will be undertaken by Town staff to communicate to residents the award of this contract and there will be no service delays for Animal Care and Control Services.

## **12. Conclusion**

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The Humane Society of Greater Niagara (HSGN) has submitted a proposal to provide Animal Care and Control Services for the Town of Fort Erie that is considered complete, thorough and technically sound. The costs over a three-year term have been identified per year for the duration of the contract (not including provisional costs), which will permit the seamless continuation of Animal Care and Control services. By agreeing to the three-year contract, the Town will also be able to budget for the cost of the contract.

The HSGN has an established operation, facility and a longstanding relationship with the Niagara community. It is governed and licensed by the Ontario SPCA and in good standing. Through a number of initiatives described under the Analysis section the HSGN has undertaken to improve its operations to gain efficiencies and maximize resources. For this reason, it is recommended that the Town Council accepts and approves the recommendation and awards the contract to HSGN for Animal Care and Control Services for the Town of Fort Erie for a period of 3 years with an increase of 4.00% for the first year and 2.39% per year thereafter for the duration of the contract. Should Council choose to award the contract to HSGN, there will be a seamless transition into the new contract, no service delays relating to Animal Care and Control services and no requirement to enter into a bridge financing agreement.

## **13. Report Approval**

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