



Subject: False Alarm By-law

Department: Corporate Services

Division: By-law/Property Standards

Report #: CPS-2025-008

Meeting Date: 2025-01-27

Recommendations

That report CPS-2025-008, False Alarm Bylaw, be received; and

That Council pass a False Alarm By-law for the Town of Orangeville and update the Fees and Charges By-law to reference the required fees.

Overview

On September 9, 2024, staff presented Report [CPS-2024-034](#), titled "False Alarm Calls Update," to Council. The report outlined the financial impact of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) transitioning to a new provincial billing model in 2024 and provided information on the false alarm data collection and education program that was initiated on January 1, 2023. During the OPP transition period, the Town was not charged for any false alarms. In 2025, the Town moves to the standard OPP billing model and will incur an additional cost of \$150.96 per false alarm occurrence.

To address these costs, staff recommend the creation of a new False Alarm By-law. The proposed by-law includes a fee structure of \$150 for the first false alarm occurrence and \$300 for any subsequent false alarms within a 12-month period from the previous occurrence. These fees are intended to recover costs associated with false alarm responses rather than to impose punitive measures.

On November 25, 2024, staff attended a public meeting to present the proposed draft False Alarm By-law. The presentation aimed to educate Council and residents about the proposed changes while addressing any concerns or questions raised during the meeting.

Analysis/Current Situation

At the November 25, 2024, public meeting, several questions were raised by members of Council regarding the proposed False Alarm By-law, while no questions were posed by residents. The following provides a summary of the key issues discussed and the corresponding responses provided by staff:

1. Imposing Fees on Property Owners When Tenants Use the Alarm System

Council inquired whether the municipality could impose false alarm fees on property owners if a tenant is the user of the alarm system and whether such an approach would withstand legal scrutiny. Staff clarified that under Section 398 of the Municipal Act, municipalities have the authority to impose fees and register them on title if necessary. The proposed by-law defines the "Alarm System Owner" as the owner, occupant, or lessee of a building, structure, or premises with an alarm system. Section 3.2 of the by-law provides that the Alarm System Owner and the registered title owner of a property shall be jointly liable to pay the Town fees. S. 4.3 states that any fees not paid within the applicable timeframe shall be added to the tax roll. This approach aligns with other municipal by-laws that hold property owners accountable for activities on their properties, regardless of occupancy by tenants.

2. Potential for Further Financial Increments

A question was raised about the feasibility of increasing fees beyond the proposed amounts for subsequent false alarms. Staff responded that the fees are intended for cost recovery and not as punitive measures, which aligns with the principles of municipal fee-setting. Therefore, further financial increments beyond the proposed \$150 for the first false alarm and \$300 for subsequent false alarms would not align with the intended purpose of the by-law as a cost-recovery mechanism.

3. Frequency of False Alarm Reporting by the OPP

Council raised the possibility of receiving false alarm reports from the OPP on a bi-monthly basis instead of the current monthly schedule. Staff acknowledged the suggestion and committed to exploring this option to determine its feasibility and potential for improving administrative efficiency.

These discussions provided valuable insights and guidance for finalizing the proposed False Alarm By-law, ensuring its alignment with legal requirements, cost-recovery principles, and operational efficiency.

Corporate Implications

Estimated Resources and Costs required to implement a Permanent Program:

Currently, the Town provides notices of false alarm infractions to property owners but do not recover any costs associated with false alarms. To estimate resourcing and costs associated with administering a false alarm program on a permanent basis, staff have included in this report the proposed administrative framework for processing each occurrence. This has resulted in a time standard being assessed and an estimated cost to process an occurrence being calculated using the suggested framework. This would result in the equivalent of 0.35 FTE being utilized to facilitate this program at the outset. The following table summarizes the financial impacts of a permanent program:

Expenditure		Hours	Cost per Hour	Annual Estimate
Internal costs	Customer Service	1.5		
	By-law	1.0		
Subtotal Internal costs		2.5	\$143.20	\$37,518
OPP charges			\$156.95	\$39,552
Total Costs			\$300.15	\$77,070

Revenue	Estimated Average Percentage of Notices issued by occurrence type (average calculated from 2023-2024 totals)	Estimated Fee Recovery based on average calls for service = 262 (average calculated from total calls in 2021-2024)
1st Occurrence (\$150)	72%	\$28,300
2nd or more occurrence (\$300)	28%	\$22,000
Total estimated revenue		\$50,300

As previously mentioned, existing staff resources are being used to issue notices to property owners for false alarm occurrences and these costs are already included in the

2025 operating budget. There are no provisions for OPP costs or total incremental revenues in the 2025 operating budget related to this program. If this program were approved, the program would serve to recoup the OPP fee for service costs for responding to False Alarms and the estimated favourable variance of \$10,748 (\$50,300 - \$39,552) would form part of the 2025 operating surplus and staff will budget for the program accordingly in 2026.

Conclusion

The proposed False Alarm By-law, included in the by-law portion of the agenda, has been developed to address the financial impact of false alarm occurrences under the new OPP provincial billing model, ensuring that costs are recovered fairly and equitably. Feedback received from Council during the November 25, 2024, public meeting has been considered and incorporated into the by-law where applicable, ensuring its alignment with legislative authority, municipal practices, and cost-recovery principles.

Staff recommend that Council proceed with the approval and adoption of the False Alarm By-law as presented. By passing this by-law, the municipality will establish a clear framework for managing false alarm occurrences, recovering associated costs, and promoting accountability among alarm system owners. This initiative will support the municipality's financial sustainability while maintaining fairness and transparency for all stakeholders.

Strategic Alignment

Strategic Plan

Strategic Goal: Future-Readiness

Objective: Due Diligence

Notice Provisions

Not applicable, however, should Council decide to implement a by-law, notice will be sent to those who have previously been issued an education notice in the past.

Respectfully submitted,

Antonietta Minichillo
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Attachment(s): None