

## **CITY OF VAUGHAN**

### **EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 17, 2015**

Item 12, Report No. 40, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on November 17, 2015.

#### **12 EXEMPTION FROM ANIMAL CONTROL BY-LAW, SCHEDULE B – PROHIBITED ANIMALS, FOR EARTH RANGERS**

The Committee of the Whole recommends approval of the recommendation contained in the following report of the Acting Deputy City Manager, Community Services and the Director of By-law & Compliance, Licensing & Permit Services, dated November 3, 2015:

##### **Recommendation**

The Acting Deputy City Manager, Community Services and the Director of By-law & Compliance, Licensing & Permit Services recommend:

1. That Council amend the Animal Control By-law No. 53-2002 to exempt the Earth Rangers Foundation from the Prohibited Animals listed on Schedule B of the By-law subject to the following:
  - (a) That Earth Rangers Foundation will keep only those animals on the List of Animals Permitted to be Kept by the Earth Rangers Foundation, as maintained by Vaughan Animal Services and approved by the Director, By-law & Compliance, Licensing & Permit Services;
  - (b) That Earth Rangers Foundation shall provide reasonable access to the City of Vaughan for purposes of ensuring compliance with the conditions of their exemption;
  - (c) That the Director, By-law & Compliance, Licensing & Permit Services have the delegated authority to add or delete animals from the aforementioned List, as long as those animals comply with the applicable conditions set out in the By-law; and
2. That By-law 196-2010, being a By-law to authorize the delegation of approval of certain administrative matters to staff, be further amended to reflect the authority in 1.(c) above.

##### **Contribution to Sustainability**

The recommendations contained within this Report reflect a measured, balanced approach to the keeping and management of prohibited animals, better ensuring the protection of the municipal natural environment, especially its fauna, and the health and safety of the public.

##### **Economic Impact**

The proposed By-law changes do not involve any anticipated increase in work or any changes in procedures that will require the allocation of additional resources. Similarly, the cost of diffusing information and/or training staff across relevant departments shall be absorbed into the current budget. As such, there is no anticipated financial impact to the City as a result of the adoption of the recommendations in this report.

##### **Communications Plan**

This Report will be available on-line through the City of Vaughan web site.

##### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to exempt Earth Rangers Foundation from those By-law provisions that prohibit it from keeping certain animals and from employing those animals to provide educational opportunities to primary schools and at other venues and community events within the City of Vaughan.

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This Report was prepared in consultation with the Earth Rangers Foundation.

**Background - Analysis and Options**

The Earth Rangers Foundation has been subject to the City of Vaughan's Animal Control By-law and as such has not been permitted to use prohibited animals in any of its programs in Vaughan. The organization has been seeking an exemption from these regulations based on its track record in the management of wildlife.

Earth Rangers is a Vaughan-based conservation organization that is dedicated to educating children and families about biodiversity and empowering them to become directly involved in protecting animals and their habitats. Earth Rangers Foundation has 40 animals that live at the Earth Rangers Centre and are incorporated into their educational programming.

Earth Rangers Foundation runs a School Outreach Program that features live animal "Ambassadors" and their amazing, natural behaviours. The program delivers a positive, science-based message about the importance of protecting the environment and adopting more sustainable behaviours. The program visits over 550 schools each year across Canada (but none in the City of Vaughan, as the current provisions of the By-law prohibit them from doing so).

Earth Rangers Foundation also runs a Classroom Visit Program that meets the environmental science curriculum requirements for students in grades 4 to 6. The program has been developed in collaboration with leading institutions, including the Toronto Zoo, Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) and Vancouver Aquarium. Earth Rangers Foundation is based in Vaughan.

**Exemption from Prohibited Animals List**

Earth Rangers Foundation does not retail any animals and their facility is not open to the public. They are strictly a conservation organization and they most often acquire animals that have been abandoned or seized by authorities. Their experiential emphasis in the delivery of their programs and their focus on young people makes them a unique organization.

The recommendations in this Report were established in consultation and agreement with the Earth Rangers Foundation and are intended to serve the public interest by allowing Earth Rangers to deliver their programs in Vaughan while ensuring that public health and safety are maintained.

Staff are recommending that any animals currently kept by Earth Rangers Foundation be exempted from any provisions of the Animal Control By-law that might otherwise prohibit them. These animals are identified in the List of Animals Permitted to be Kept by the Earth Rangers Foundation ("the List"), to be maintained by Vaughan Animal Services. Additions to the List would require approval from the Director, By-law & Compliance, Licensing & Permit Services through his delegated authority, and would be subject to applicable by-law requirements, mainly that all mammals kept not exceed a weight of 35 kilograms. The List is included as Schedule A to this report.

The exemption would allow Earth Rangers Foundation to provide programs that involve their animals to elementary schools and at community/public events, such as conservation areas, theme parks and festivals, within the City of Vaughan. In addition, Earth Rangers Foundation would be permitted to provide public programming at other venues. Earth Rangers Foundation are often asked by the Vaughan community to participate in local events, many of which take place outdoors, creating some concern around the containment of the animals. As such, Earth Rangers Foundation will limit their programs at public/community events to static presentations where the animals are restrained at all times (via leash, enclosure etc.) and equipped with telemetry. In the unlikely event that an animal were to escape it could then be tracked and retrieved.

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The addition of any other species not currently on the list would require formal application by Earth Rangers to the City and would need approval from the Director, By-law Compliance, Licensing & Permit Services. Earth Rangers Foundation would also be subject to inspections by Animal Services staff, if and when required to do so, in order to ensure compliance with the terms of their exemption.

In discussions, and despite the proposed exemption, Earth Rangers Foundation have agreed not to keep poisonous reptiles or snakes or those that exceed an adult length of 2.0 metres, and have further agreed not to introduce any new species without consultation and approval accordingly.

#### **Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan**

The proposed recommendations contained in this Report are aligned with the City's strategy of citizens first through service excellence, by ensuring that the City of Vaughan's Animal Control By-law provides the necessary regulatory framework to appropriately protect the health, safety and well-being of the City's residents and visitors, and by reflecting community standards while supporting community needs and wants with respect to the keeping and management of species otherwise prohibited.

#### **Regional Implications**

Although there are no direct regional implications that have been identified as a result of the recommendations of this Report, staff believe that they are in line with regional and provincial mandates with respect to the matter.

#### **Conclusion**

One of the main purposes of the Animal Control By-law is to provide a regulatory framework to ensure the health, safety and well-being of the public. Through the use of animal "Ambassadors", the Earth Rangers Foundation has successfully been providing educational programs throughout the Region for many years. Animals are responsibly procured; they are often orphaned or abandoned and include native and non-native species. Due to the unique nature of this organization's mandate and operation, staff support and recommend that the Earth Rangers Foundation be granted an exemption from the City of Vaughan's list of prohibited animals (Schedule "B" to By-law 53-2002, as amended), subject to regulatory oversight and inventory approval as noted within this report.

#### **Attachments**

1. Schedule A - Animals Permitted to Be Kept by the Earth Rangers Foundation

#### **Report prepared by:**

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(A copy of the attachments referred to in the foregoing have been forwarded to each Member of Council and a copy thereof is also on file in the office of the City Clerk.)