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Coming up at 2 pm, it's this month's Committee of Whole. This is what's on the agenda:



Committee of the Whole Preview – What's on the Agenda for the Octob...

October begins with Committee of the Whole, and this meeting might mark some big changes when it comes to some specific areas of city life. If you pay your water bill, have a personal security came...

<https://guelphpolitico.ca/2024/09/20/committee-of-the-whole-preview-whats-on-the-age...>

Cllr Gibson asks about the stormwater surplus, could that be used to absorb \$700k added costs? Krauter says from billing perspective, they want to make sure they have the right model, admin and user fees. That's the key piece of this.

Acting CFO O'Dwyer adds that the 2025 budget confirmation will better align the stormwater revenue. Gibson asks for assurance that the \$700k be absorbed by the City as opposed to going to ratepayer. Krauter says they will be looking at that.

Krauter also says that a user fee they'll be looking at is an account set-up fee, which is something that Alectra presently collects when you sign up.

O'Rourke says capital costs will be covered by reserves, but it also concerned about user fees because this isn't the customers doing. Krauter says that account sign up would be applied only to new accounts. They believe there will also be synergies with existing systems.

Hamilton is presently working on bringing billing in house, and Markham and Vaughan haven't made a decision yet about what they're going to do.

O'Rourke asks if we knew this was coming during the merger. Krauter says there was a renewal in 2020, which had some transition provisions in that agreement that are helping to inform things now.

Cllr Billings asks about pre-authorised payments, will that carry over. Krauter says no, because the present billing is based on a deal between the customer and Alectra, so they will have to set up a new automated payment.

Mayor Guthrie asks if staff are looking for synergies with the other municipalities. Krauter says yes.

Billings/Allt move Recommendation: That the Water, Wastewater and Stormwater Billing Transition report 2024- 376 dated October 1, 2024, be received.

It's approved.

Chair Downer now takes over for Public Services agenda.

One item on the consent agenda: Residential Security Cameras By-law Review.

Recommendation: That staff be directed to create optional guidelines for proper use of residential security cameras.

Guthrie/Busuttil move receipt.

Guthrie asks how much more time is going to be spent on this, just create guidelines. GM Operations Godfrey confirms that's correct, there will be a web page people will be able to refer to.

O'Rourke asks to confirm, if people have concerns, they can still reach out if they're worried about where their neighbours are pointing their cameras. Godfrey says residents will have avenues they can pursue, including civil court.

Guthrie says that this is a perfect example of people reading what the recommendations are, b/c the immediate response was that the City was banning security cameras, and that's not what's happening here.

Next time, contact him or a councillor before rushing to judgement.

Recommendation approved.

Now the big one: Fireworks By-law Review. DCAO Clack-Bush begins by noting back in July '23 council gave feedback about bylaw review schedule on this matter. Council will be provided with the update sked for what reviews are happening next.

Jamie Parr, Service Performance Development Analyst, now kicks off the presentation. tl;dr - Staff are seeking Council approval for the creation of a Fireworks By-law based on a permit system.

Guelph presently allows fireworks for:

Victoria Day – May 20

Canada Day – July 1

Diwali – November 1

Fireworks come with issues though:

- Noise pollution
- Chemical and physical pollution
- Risk of fire
- Bodily harm

- Mental health and PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder)

- Wildlife and pets

Staff came up with 4 options

Option 1: keep existing days and improve safety

Option 2: increase the number of allowed days to other culturally significant days and improve safety

Option 3: by permit only

Option 4: total ban

We're going to talk about #3.

Lots of community engagement on this:

- 1,327 communities participated in the survey

- 55% of respondents felt safe or very safe when in relation to professional fireworks

- 56% of respondents indicated they were supportive to very supportive of a firework ban

What they said:

- Safety and environmental concerns

- Noise and disturbance are challenges

- Regulation and improved enforcement

- Preference for public vs. private displays

- Cultural and community significance

So staff are recommending a by-law based on a permit system for large fireworks displays such as community and special events. This would be a \$100 permit fee plus fire inspection fee.

Bylaw would include regs such as:

Min. safe distances from residences and vulnerable occupancies (schools, nursing, and care facilities)

Displays be discharged by a licensed display supervisor

Sufficient liability insurance

Inspections for safety

(cont'd)

Planned for acceptable times and locations

Animal safety management

Onto the delegations starting with Alex Ciccone. He's says this is a good and thorough review of this matter, he used to work for the Guelph Humane Society and just wrote a chapter of a textbook on impact of fireworks on animals.

Ciccone notes that there are chemicals from fireworks that are known to cause asthma attacks and other issues. They're both persistent and bio accumulative, meaning that they stick around in the environment for a while.

Ciccone notes that fireworks going off has the same decibel level as a rifle going off, which is not a surprise that it triggers PTSD. Also, there's a big impact on migratory birds like geese, it messes up their flight patterns.

Ciccone says that this proposal is good, but it can go further like a full ban.

Allt asks if fireworks can be appropriately replaced with light and music shows. Ciccone says he's not sure, but there's a hypothetical component whereas we know there's a negative impact with fireworks that's verified.

Next, Priyam Vyas who says that fireworks are more than just colourful displays, they're cultural and traditional valuable. He suggests more of a focus on promoting safety, and notes people don't know how to get a permit.

Vyas is the manager of Pataka Fireworks.



Preparations underway to celebrate Diwali in Waterloo Region | CTV N...

People across Waterloo Region - and the world - will be celebrating Diwali this weekend. We take a look at what's being done to prepare for the festival of lights.

<https://kitchener.ctvnews.ca/diwali-celebrations-and-the-meaning-behind-the-festival-of-...>

Next is Tom Jacobs from Rocket Fireworks Inc. He says 170db is the decibel level for professional fireworks, but consumer fireworks are only about 100-110 (more like a drill). He says there are "contrary facts" to what Ciccone presented.

Jacobs says it's hard to see the value of a permit when fireworks are only used on three occasions and there are a variety of safe options for any space. The products are rigorously tested, so that leaves education, which should be the focus.

Jacobs says the bigger concern is when fireworks are used outside the legal confines, so maybe there should be more legal options. As for pets, maybe keep your dogs indoors.

Next is Aleem Kanji of the Canadian National Fireworks Association. He says he submitted a presentation to the clerk but there was some tech issues. Downer says actually they didn't get on time, but he can send it to council after the meeting.

Kanji says he represents half-a-dozen retailers here in Guelph and notes the strenuous regulations that already exist. They also have their own initiatives like the "Good Neighbour Programs"

They have a website, but it doesn't seem to be available right now.



Kanji says it's their experience in other places with permits that no one applies for them. Also, if Guelph supports a ban people will buy them from nearby communities or make their own (👉)

He says when you look at the facts, air quality is not adversely affected. The Ministry of the Environment notes that there's no negative impact on the air from backyard fireworks.

O'Rourke asks how they promote their education campaigns. Kanji says they use traditional and social media, and will put up billboards no cost to communities. They partner with municipalities. He also says it will be difficult to do that work with a ban.

O'Rourke asks what a licensed display supervisor is? Kanji says this is something that's usually reserved for those big fireworks displays, so the onus should be on the point of sale, and those employees should make people properly aware of the options.

O'Rourke asks why there's such a push on for full bans in Ontario. Kanji says what they've seen is rise of underground illegal enterprises, and cities come back unable to cope.

Found at least one example of a reversal:



Caron asks if a sparkler is a firework, Kanji says this is a "very important question", but short answer is yes. The Brampton band (which was lifted very quietly he says*) allows them.

*Recent Brampton Guardian article seems to disagree with that appraisal:



Harmin Gill from Phatboy Fireworks on York/Victoria is next. He notes the cultural importance of fireworks like Diwali, and creates community among Guelph's diversity. He also says ppl can just drive to Georgetown or Elora to buy them if banned, but...



Gill says there stores are super busy, and he's concerned about people, especially kids, getting a hold of unregulated or "black market" fireworks. More emphasis needs to be put on safety.

Gill says that nobody's even came back to them so that that they were injured with Phatboy fireworks, or that they "burned someone's house down".

Chew asks if they have any relationship with Guelph Fire or bylaw to help with education. Gill says we could do like Vaughan where there's a sit-down every year with the vendors to talk about concerns and get feedback about what needs to be done.

Jon Luff is not here, so we move on to Bill Raynault from the Mystical Distributing Company Ltd. His company distributes fireworks across Canada and wants to hold on this tradition.

Luff says that wax candles kill about 8 people every year, which is a more bloody record than fireworks. Where he get that stat? Statistics Canada:

https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/hc-sc/migration/hc-sc/hl-vs/alt_formats/pdf/iyh-vsv/prod/candle-bougie-eng.pdf

Stats for fireworks related injuries: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/injury-prevention/canadian-hospitals-injury-reporting-prevention-program/injury-reports/injuries-associated-fireworks.html#>

This one might be better. Between April 1, 2011 and April 13, 2023, there were 210 reported cases of injuries related to fireworks and other similar products, representing 11 cases per 100,000 CHIRPP records. <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/datalab/firework-blog.html>

Arthur Lam is next. He would like to see the Lunar New Year added to the list of allowed occasions for fireworks/crackers.

Cllr Busuttill asks if he's here (on the phone) representing anyone. He's not. Mr Lam is here for Mr Lam.

O'Rourke asks a big community display operated by a professional fit nicely into this framework. Lam agrees but says that it stops use for fireworks for smaller occasions. O'Rourke notes that those aren't allowed already.

Chew asks if Lam or a group has put in an expression of interest for Lunar new year fireworks. Lam says that's a good point, but the Chinese community is worried about gov't involvement incl. the application for a license.

Mark Mathews is not here, and neither is Harpreet Singh. So that's the end of the delegate list.

Caron/Goller move the Recommendation: That staff be directed to create a new permit-based fireworks by-law to replace and repeal Fireworks By-law (1993)-14362.

Caron asks if part of the work will be engaging DEI staff considering the cultural implications. Godfrey says they have spoken to that staff and they are already part of the efforts.

Caron asks about \$100 fee, where's that money going? Can it be treated as deposit like election signs? Godfrey says that's up to the will of council but fee was meant to be cost recovery for staff fine. There is the inspection fee too, which is \$108.

Caron says putting the two fees together makes more sense, a one-stop shop. But what about clean-up? Godfrey says part of permit system would be provisos about clean-up and damages.

Gibson wants to make clear distinctions: Sale of home fireworks would be prohibited, and only allowed in permitted places with the previous conditions. Godfrey says that's all correct. Consumer fireworks would not be permitted.

Gibson asks about animal safety plan and license individual. Parr says Guelph Humane Society has worked with big celebrations before, so it's a preemptive plan. Gibson says this seems "cloudy", what kind of certification are we talking about?

Godfrey says that this would be part of the formal application process that's developed and the actual inspections will be done by Guelph Fire.

We just had a tech glitch with the councillors appearing remotely and now the remote councillors can't hear what's going on here in the chambers. Or maybe they can. Clerk McMahon asks for a break to find out what the heck is going on.



Tech issues seem resolved so we will pick up where we left off with Gibson.

Gibson: Licensed operating instructor, what's the accreditation?

Parr: Yes, a license pyro-technician is a federal regulated position and expert.

Cllr Allt asks about potential for drone and laser shows should be included here? Godfrey says there's no direction for that right now, and they have a lot of stuff on the plate. Plus, drone are overseen with federal regulations.

Allt asks if fire prevention can ask about impact on their unit when it comes to fireworks displays. Fire staff says when they receive a request it's time consuming & there are safety plans and details taken into consideration. Attendance may not be required, but they are there.

Allt asks about illegal fireworks. Fire says they respond to emergency events as they arise and there's a history in the city of improper discharge and disposal causing property damage, 29 reported in the last 3 years, no injuries though. 1 significant house fire too.

Guthrie asks what would the cost be for a person to put on a fireworks display, all in. Godfrey says it would be based on length and type of display, but they can put some numbers together.

Guthrie: Is this basically a ban on one person and a couple of neighbours while letting big shows proceed?

Godfrey: Permit only for larger displays and commercial fireworks not permitted.

Guthrie asks where's the line. Godfrey says anyone that wants to discharge fireworks can get a permit, the group can be big or small.

Busuttil asks about consultation with school boards, because there is community use on school properties. Parr says there was no one-on-one consultation with school boards.

O'Rourke asks what the problem we're trying to solve with this bylaw? Clack-Bush says council gave them direction to do it and it's based on community feedback and complaints. (This was original scheduled for 2027 fyi)

Fire Chief Brian Arnold says that the National Association of Fire Chiefs have been pushing the feds for years to ban fireworks, 24% of departments had at least one fire incident caused by fireworks. Also there are injuries, most commonly in youths.

O'Rourke says she doesn't like bylaws that are really hard to enforce, we have bylaws in parks, and the 2 weeks on either side of an allowed holiday. We can't get people to follow these minimal restrictions, so how do we enforce this?

Godfrey says it's difficult to enforce bylaws on private property unless a complaint, and on the days allowed, this would prohibit fireworks unless you have a permit. He assumes that they will still get a lot of calls, but this would allow them to address issues

Goller asks about enforcement. Godfrey says this is a permit based system; you get the permit, choose your fireworks and let fire determine if it's safe. There will be a change to how fireworks are sold in Guelph.

Goller: So you do enforce people w/o a permit or buy fireworks outside of Guelph?

Godfrey: The regulation is firing off fireworks w/o a permit, won't matter where you buy them.

Goller: Will there be fines.

Godfrey: Yes.

Guthrie asks about current fine. Godfrey says they'll look that up. Guthrie asks if it's \$100 now can they make it \$1000. Godfrey says they take into account a number of options when setting fines, including comparators. Staff can issue summons w/ repeat offenders

Chew asks about stream lining the process. Godfrey says that they always look at ways to make processes easy for people to access. He's not sure what the turnaround time for a permit might look like right now.

Godfrey says a week might be possible, but they have to take into account that they would get a lot of applications around Canada Day, so it might not be possible to process any single application quickly.

Billings asks about how onerous the animal management plan would be, not sure how it would be accomplished. Godfrey says they would work with GHS on that, normally they discharge one firework to scatter the birds, or walk a dog along perimeter.

Caton asks about moving an amendment by substitution. Downer says no, there's a recommendation on the floor and the clerk confirms that's a no go.

O'Rourke says she will support this today in order to get more feedback. Busuttill says knowing where and when and making some considerations for safety is a good idea. This is not outside the line with bouncy castles and the like.

Caton says there's evidence that a total ban is something we really need to go for, and intends to put that motion on the floor if this fails at the end of the month.

Caron says that she doesn't think there's a call for a total ban yet, but we're getting there. Asks when this bylaw will come back, and Godfrey says they can get timeline before end of the month.

Gibson says his deep fear is the actions of a few will penalise the majority, and he's scared this bylaw isn't going to fix that. He wants to support some form of regulation, and will work with staff to develop some guidelines.

Allt says he will support this, would love drone shows but we're not there yet. Guelph has been progressive on pesticide bans, smoking bans, both environmental concerns, and we need to be mindful of concerns from Guelph Fire.

Chew says he's passionate about public education and there are a number of stakeholders who are unaffiliated and doesn't want a comms gap.

Goller says he gets a lot of complaints about fireworks, wants a total ban. Wants to hear from the people of the next few weeks and invites people to let him know their concerns or support for this move.

Guthrie says he won't support now, but wants to get more info for the end of the month and it's clear that the status quo can't remain. People reporting holes in their pool cover, for example. And yes, impact on pets and waste. Need some regulation, not heavy regs though.

Downer says this is a logical next step, but she has some legal liability questions.

Recommendation approved 7-5 (Billings, Richardson, Guthrie, Gibson and Chew against).

Announcements?

-Oct 24 there's a Ward 5 town hall, location TBD.

Meeting adjourned!



@threadreaderapp unroll please!

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