

Report to Council

Report Title: Municipal Garbage Bag Tag Program During COVID-19 Pandemic

Prepared By: Gregory Furtney, Director of Operations

Department: Operations

Date: April 7, 2020

Report Number: PW2020-04 **File Number:** C11PW, P03

Attachments: N/A

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number PW2020-04 – Municipal Garbage Bag Tag Program During COVID-19 Pandemic, prepared by Gregory Furtney, Director of Operations for information purposes and further directs staff to continue with the Municipal Garbage Bag Tag Program during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Report:

Background:

The Municipality of Brockton, like all its municipal neighbours, have a garbage “Bag Tag” program in place to offset annual municipal waste management expenditures, related to curbside collection, and to help encourage residents to recycle and compost.

Currently Bag Tags cost \$2.00 each and are available for purchase at eight (8) local retailers, the Brant Landfill, and the Municipal Office.

Hanover, Arran-Elderslie, South Bruce, Huron-Kinloss, Kincardine, Saugeen Shores, Town of South Bruce Peninsula, and the Town of North Bruce Peninsula all have similar programs. Individual Bag Tag prices vary slightly per municipality, between \$2.00 and \$3.00.

The Bag Tag Program in Brockton has normally not been a problem for residents, however, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and associated Public Health Protocols, a handful of residents have suggested that the program be postponed until after the pandemic crisis is over. A similar discussion is happening between staff and Council at Huron-Kinloss, Kincardine, Saugeen Shores, and will likely be a topic of discussion for the rest.

Analysis:

The Bag Tag Program is an important offset revenue source. The price of a Bag Tag is minimal and comparable to Brockton’s neighbouring municipalities.

Offset revenue for:

2018 = \$74,054 (approximately 37,000 bag tags sold); Weekly Revenue = \$1,424

2019 = \$80,383 (approximately 40,000 bag tags sold); Weekly Revenue = \$1,545

2020 (as of March 31st) = \$15,264 (approximately 7,600 bag tags sold). Weekly Revenue = \$1,272

Annual or monthly sales vary because residents don't purchase one bag tag at a time. Residents typically buy 10 or more at a time. It is likely that there are more bag tag sales in some months than others, as residents can use more than one bag tag per week (i.e. Christmas, Spring Cleaning, etc.). It is difficult to estimate Offset Revenue losses given the unpredictability of bag tag purchases/ sales, length of various seasons, and the length of the COVID-19 pandemic. It could be weeks or months before the pandemic is officially over.

As of the writing of this report, Hanover, Arran-Elderslie, South Bruce, Huron-Kinloss, Saugeen Shores, Kincardine, Town of South Bruce Peninsula, and the Town of North Bruce Peninsula all have their Bag Tag programs in place. There has been open discussion, however, between area municipalities that suggest that some municipalities are looking at options, including one free bag tag or have had discussion on suspension of their bag tag programs for the pandemic. If one or two municipalities do suspend their programs, it is likely that the remaining neighbour Municipal Councils will be pressured to do the same.

Staff are recommending that the Municipality of Brockton continue to run the existing Bag Tag program, through the pandemic crisis, for the following reasons:

- 1.) Additional Costs for Curbside Collection— Brockton's garbage collection contractor has commented that costs will likely increase for collection as there will be more garbage volume and more frequent trips to the landfill each pickup day. There may even be service disruptions if there aren't enough hours in the day to complete a scheduled collection cycle, due to excess collection volumes. Staff anticipate that residents may double or triple their curbside collection volumes because residents are mostly home and working to clean and do other maintenance to their homes, inside and out, as they wait for the pandemic to end. Someone that typically puts out one garbage bag a week, may decide to put out 3 or 4, depending on their home projects.
- 2.) Additional Costs for disposal at the Hanover/ Walkerton Landfill – if waste volumes are increased, landfill capacity decreases. There is a cost associated with that (i.e. labour, equipment costs, cover material, loss of space).
- 3.) Offset Revenues Lost – With no offset revenues to cover collection and disposal expenditures, the Waste Management Budget will certainly be insufficient. Offset revenues will never be recovered by any provincial program/ funding.
- 4.) Complaints – We have only registered a handful of inquiries, under 10.
- 5.) Bag Tag Purchases – If social/ physical distancing is an issue for purchasing bag tags, residents still need groceries and other items and there are 8 retailers that they can go to buy bag tags. If they don't want to or can't buy bag tags, Brant and Greenock residents can attend the Brant Landfill and Walkerton residents can use the Hanover/ Walkerton Landfill on the days that they are open. Both remain open with protocols in place to keep staff and the public safe. As of April, the Brant Landfill is open an additional day a week (Tuesdays).

- 6.) Length of Crisis – The length of the crisis is unknown. Once you postpone or cancel a program, there will likely be some substantial push-back from residents when you wish to re-instate it.

It is a staff recommendation to continue with the Garbage Bag Tag program to avoid any service interruptions (collection and disposal), encourage residents to recycle and compost to protect landfill capacity/ filling, and to maintain offset revenues. A decision now will have an effect on future operations and costs.

Sustainability Checklist:

What aspect of the Brockton Sustainable Strategic Plan does the content/recommendations in this report help advance?

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| • Do the recommendations help move the Municipality closer to its Vision? | N/A |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Cultural Vibrancy? | N/A |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Economic Prosperity? | N/A |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to Environmental Integrity? | Yes |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to the Social Equity? | Yes |

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding:

- Do the recommendations represent a sound financial investment from a sustainability perspective? Yes

The only anticipated budgetary impact is, if the Bag Tag Program is suspended, the loss in Offset Revenues with a corresponding increase in expenditures.

Reviewed By:



Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

Respectfully Submitted by:



Gregory Furtney, Director of Operations

Reviewed By:



Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer