

FORMAL REPORT

To:	Chair Stratthdee and Members of Strategic Priorities Committee
Prepared by:	Grant Brouwer, Director of Building and Development
Date of Meeting:	21 November 2017
Subject:	DEV 36-2017 Sign By-law Update

PURPOSE

The purpose of this staff report is to report to Council on the results of the consultation with downtown property owners, business owners, and the BIA in regards to the Sign By-law infractions and enforcement issues.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT DEV 36-2017 Sign By-law Update be received for discussion; and,

THAT the Strategic Priorities Committee direct Staff to revise By-Law 33-2005, a by-law to prohibit and regulate signs and other advertising devices and the posting of notices on buildings or vacant lots within the Town of St. Marys.

BACKGROUND

At the March 21, 2017 regular Council meeting Council received a letter from the St Marys Heritage Committee outlining the Committee's dissatisfaction with the current enforcement of the Town's Sign By-law. Council directed staff to report back to Council with further information.

Resolution 2017-03-21-05

THAT staff report back with an education campaign of the Sign By-law Enforcement.

At the April 25, 2017 regular Council meeting, Council received DEV 10-2017 which outlined information related to sign by-law enforcement in the Town of St. Marys. Highlights from this report include:

- Unless there is an apparent health and safety concern, staff has historically enforced the Sign By-law through a complaint driven process, and has reacted to these complaints through a written process, much like the Town's Property Standards By-law.
- Staff conducted a tour of the Central Commercial District (CCD) on March 23, 2017 and cataloged all of the current signs. The CCD has approximately 84 signs of different shapes and forms;
 - of the 84 signs, only 33 have had permits issued
 - of the 84 signs, only 11 were installed prior to the sign by-law being in force in 2005
 - With the 51 signs that have no record of permits being issued, approximately 50% of them would pass the current bylaw leaving approximately 25 signs that would need to be replaced or a variance issued by Council. Common issues observed included:
 1. The business owner may have had a sign permit at one location, moved to a different address, and installed the same sign without applying for a permit

2. Signs in, on, or behind windows
3. All sidewalk signs (mainly not entering into an agreement with the Town)

Due to the high number of signs not compliant with the Town's Sign By-law, staff recommended in the report that the Town move to a proactive enforcement model. To address current non-compliances staff proposed a grace period to allow the Town to establish an information campaign to ensure each property and business owner understood the status of their sign and allow them time to apply for a sign permit.

Council received the report and provided the following direction to staff:

Resolution 2017-04-25-20

THAT Staff consult with the downtown property owners, business owners, and the BIA in regards to the Sign By-law infractions and enforcement issues with a report back to Council; and,

THAT Staff report back on an alternative approval process for sandwich boards.

REPORT

A public meeting was held on Thursday, June 1, 2017, in the Town Hall Auditorium, to gather comments on the Sign Bylaw from the BIA, property owners, and residents. Members of Council and approximately two dozen people attended. Throughout the course of the meeting some common themes emerged. These include:

1. Remove the requirement for an encroachment agreement for sandwich-board signs
2. Let the Store / Property Owners know the process / Develop a business license process
3. Make the process easier
4. Be proactive with enforcement of the bylaw
5. Update the Sign Bylaw (2005) to better match the Heritage Conservation District plan (2012)

Outside of the meeting, staff have also received other comments that suggested the Town not have a sign bylaw at all and allow property owners to manage their buildings as they see fit.

Based on the feedback received, it is staff's recommendation that minor revisions to the bylaw should be made. These would include, but not limited to, such revisions as the process requirements for sandwich-board signs, update language to match more recent policy (HCD Plan) and update consultation and approval process for sign permits. This by-law prohibits and regulates signs and other advertising devices and the posting of notices on buildings or vacant lots within the Town of St. Marys. Once the by-law is revised, at that time it would be appropriate to begin the proposed proactive enforcement of the new rules established by Council.

As a long term strategy, and working parallel with a more proactive enforcement program, the Corporate Services department (through Economic Development) is planning a more proactive approach to educating current and prospective business owners about the sign by-law requirements and processes. A Business Information Package, which will be beneficial to both prospective and new business / building owners, will contain information on a range of topics, including sign guidelines / applications.

Education on the by-law, guidelines, and processes can be delivered in many ways including: Town website; implementation of Business Registry; Business Update Newsletter; Business-to-Business events; BIA meetings; meeting with Realtors; doing a mock signage application to ensure that the process is as efficient as possible; and providing regular updates to all stakeholders. Specific products can include a 'Signs in St. Marys 101 Information Sheet'; an inventory of signs that meet the by-law and guidelines so that people can see what is expected; and a pictorial guide to show examples of good signage that would fit in St. Marys.

SUMMARY

This report was presented as a follow-up to the public meeting held for the Sign By-law on June 1, 2017. Based on Council's previous discussions and the feedback received from stakeholders, staff is recommending a comprehensive review and amendment to the sign by-law.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Undetermined at this point.

STRATEGIC PLAN

- ☒ This initiative is supported by the following priorities, outcomes, and tactics in the Plan.
- Pillar #3 Balanced Growth
 - Outcome: A key to growth is to ensure a vibrant and sustainable commercial sector.
 - Tactic(s): Create a welcome wagon program for new businesses; website development; process of downtown revitalization
 - Pillar #5 Economic Development
 - Outcome: Emphasize culture as a key economic driver for the community
 - Tactic(s): Provide an attractive and well-functioning streetscape in the downtown core

OTHERS CONSULTED

BIA

Property Owners/Store Owners in the Core

Trisha McKibbin, Director of Cooperate Services / Deputy Clerk

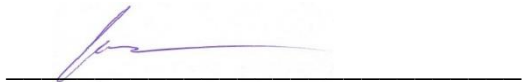
ATTACHMENTS

Staff report DEV 10-2017

Letter from the St Marys Heritage Committee February 22, 2017

REVIEWED BY

Recommended by the Department



Grant Brouwer
Director of Building and Development

Recommended by the CAO



Brent Kittmer
CAO / Clerk