

DATE OF MEETING NOVEMBER 15, 2023

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SUBJECT FUNDING REQUEST FROM CAT NAP SOCIETY

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To present the Other Grant application received from the CatNap (Cats Needing Aid and Protection) Society and contemplate an ongoing funding request from the organization.

Recommendation

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council add a decision point for Council consideration to the 2024-2028 Financial Plan deliberations to consider providing ongoing funding to the CatNap Society for animal control services.

BACKGROUND

CatNap Society Background

For over 22 years, CatNap had addressed the suffering of cats who have been left to fend for themselves. CatNap rescues unwanted stray and abandoned semi-feral and feral cats, helps them receive appropriate veterinary care for spay/neuter, and diagnosis/treatment for infections, parasite burden and injuries, socialize them in foster care and adopt them whenever possible.

Some of the programs and services CatNap provides are:

- Cat rescue
- Provision of veterinary care
- Trap-Neuter-Release stray/feral cats
- Assign caregivers to provide food, water and shelter to released feral cats

The society is run by approximately 90 volunteers who donate over 30,000 hours per year. While the society does charge an adoption fee, these fees do not compensate for the diagnosis/treatment of complex medical needs required for many of the rescued cats before they are made available for adoption.

CatNap's approaches to self-generated income include:

- Adoption fees
- Donation campaigns
- Various online donation/fundraising platforms
- Fundraising

Other Grants Program Background

The City of Nanaimo maintains an annual program to award civic grant funding to eligible non-profit organizations operating in the City of Nanaimo. The intent of the Other Grant is to offer another avenue to community organizations that do not fit into any categories of any of the specific grant programs.

The criteria for awarding the Other Grant includes:

- Large number of volunteers
- Registered non-profit society
- Demonstrated financial need
- Accessible to large portion of the community

In addition, the kind of funding for other grants is outlined in the policy as follows:

- Educational funding
- Emergency funding
- Capital grants on a matching basis up to a maximum of \$5,000
- In-kind funding for facility rental

History of Funding Requests from Cat Nap Society

In the past, funding requests have been provided to the CatNap Society and also to the Nanaimo & District SPCA for the Spay and Neuter (SNIP) program through the Emergency Funding category of the 'Other Grants' program. In 2022, there was a \$15,000 funding request from the CatNap Society that was supported and approved by Council.

In 2023, the CatNap Society has submitted another application with a grant request of \$36,000, which could be requested from either 2023 or 2024 funding sources. A copy of this current application can be found in ATTACHMENT A.

Given that the 2023 fiscal year is almost over, and no provisions were made for CatNap funding in the 2023 budget, a 2024 funding source is preferred by City Staff.

For 2024, the funding request of \$36,000 includes a \$6,000 annual (or \$500 monthly) rental subsidy request to assist with costs that the CatNap Society is incurring for the rental of a cattery building. This building costs the CatNap society \$1,000/month.

Through discussions with the CatNap Society, the Society has requested \$36,000 of funding support for 2024 due to their current financial situation. For future years, the funding request would be an annual grant of \$25,000. To ensure consistency with other City operating funding agreements, if an ongoing funding request was approved by Council, a maximum five-year term would apply, as well as a requirement to provide annual reporting to Council.

DISCUSSION

Funding Request Process

As evidenced in the grant applications and discussions with the CatNap Society, it is becoming clear that in the absence of ongoing funding, there will be annual grant requests being made.

Similar to recent other grants requests that have been presented to Council, this request for operating funding does not fit the criteria for the emergency funding category of the Other Grants program, because funding requests are not meant to be ongoing or annual in nature.

Contemplation of Ongoing Funding

The primary question is whether or not the CatNap Society should be provided with annual operating funds from the City of Nanaimo to support the animal control activities that are being performed.

There are very few non-profit organizations that receive an operating contribution from the City of Nanaimo. Municipal best practices outline that any organizations that receive this type of funding should be a true extension of municipal services.

A comprehensive review of Animal Control Services was recently completed, when Neilson Strategies was retained by the City to conduct a review of the City's Animal Control services and provide recommendations. At the 2020-JUN-08 Special Council meeting, Mr. Neilson presented his findings and report entitled "Animal Contract Service Review". A copy of this report is attached as ATTACHMENT C.

One of the recommendations from that review was:

"The City should consider providing some level of financial assistance to support CatNap's activities. It is not suggested that the City play a direct role in the in the TNR (Trap, Neuter Release) program – the City has enough other animal control responsibilities on which to focus. The City could, however, provide a financial contribution in the form of an annual grant-in-aid to support the Society's work, and to help ensure its sustainability."

On page 21 of the report, it outlines that "Cat Nap is the only organization in Nanaimo that deals with feral cats. Neither the SPCA nor the City is currently equipped to take-in or care for these animals. Rescue organizations similar to Cat Nap are active in many communities in BC, including in Nanoose Bay and the Cowichan Valley."

Based on these statements, it could be argued that the City of Nanaimo would otherwise have to expend funds to deal with the feral cat population in the absence of the Cat Nap Society.

Advantages, disadvantages, and risk considerations of providing ongoing funding would include:

Advantages:

- Ongoing funding would allow the CatNap Society to continue providing their services to the community, and would allow for the TNR (Trap, Neuter, Release) program to continue, as the CatNap Society has outlined that the SPCA is currently not able to offer the 'low-income spay/neuter program.'
- Annual funding would allow the CatNap Society to better plan for the provision of services each year

Disadvantages:

- The provision of annual funding (\$36,000 for 2024 and \$25,000 in subsequent years) would have a direct impact on the City's annual operating budget and property tax rates.

Risks:

- The CatNap Society may no longer be able to provide the level of services that it has been providing, which could result in the City having to incur contracted expenses in order to pay for these services

The option provided in this report will allow the grant application and ongoing funding request to be contemplated during the 2024-2028 Financial Plan discussions. It will also allow for the Finance and Audit Committee and Council to have some time to contemplate this request before having to make a decision.

The tentative date for this decision point to be presented to Council would be on 2023-DEC-01.

OPTIONS

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee Recommend that Council add a decision point for Council consideration to the 2024-2028 Financial Plan deliberations to consider providing ongoing funding to the CatNap Society for animal control services.

Advantages:

- Provides Council the opportunity to consider the funding ask along with all the other requests during the 2024-2028 Financial Plan deliberations

Disadvantages:

- The funding request will be considered slightly later in the calendar year

Financial Implications:

- No impact on the current year 2023 budget

2. Alternate direction, as provided by the Finance and Audit Committee.

SUMMARY POINTS

- An Other Grant application under the Emergency Funding category has been received from the CatNap Society for \$36,000
- Based on the funding request history, Council could consider whether the CatNap Society should receive ongoing operating funding or not
- This could be contemplated with a decision point slide during the 2024-2028 Financial Plan deliberations
- Through discussions with the CatNap Society, the requested ongoing annual funding amount is \$25,000

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A – Application from CatNap Society

ATTACHMENT B – Animal Control Service Review

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