



City of Port Moody

Report/Recommendation to Council

Date: June 16, 2020
Submitted by: General Manager of Engineering and Operations
Subject: Residential Snow Clearing – Review of Volunteer Snow Shoveling Service

Purpose

To provide Council with an update on a staff review of potential volunteer snow shoveling services.

Recommended Resolution(s)

THAT staff be directed to implement the recognition program (Option 3) for snow and ice removal on public sidewalks as recommended in the report dated June 16, 2020 from the General Manager of Engineering and Operations regarding Residential Snow Clearing – Review of Volunteer Snow Shoveling Service.

Background

On January 9, 2018, following a presentation from the Seniors Focus Committee regarding Snow and Winter Safety Program, Council passed the following resolution:

RC18/008

THAT staff be directed to investigate the feasibility of entering into a partnership with the City of Coquitlam for use of their online Snow Angel Program.

Discussions with the City of Coquitlam were held, but it was quickly identified that there was not suitable rationale to enter into a partnership with them: Coquitlam's snow angel program utilized a portion of time of some staff positions for manual communication with and matching of residents and volunteers and it would not be more efficient or practical to partner compared to managing a separate program via Port Moody staff. Following these discussions, Port Moody staff proceeded to investigate the possibility of starting a similar Port Moody program and exploring other options.

Discussion

Staff considered three program options to assist homeowners with low mobility with the removal of snow from the public sidewalks in front of their residences:

- Option 1 – City Volunteers: A volunteer Snow Angel Program modeled on the one in place in the City of Coquitlam where volunteers are directly matched with residents after screening by City staff;
- Option 2 – City Staff: A City staff program where paid staff remove the snow from public sidewalks in front of private residences. This was modeled on the City's existing Set Out/Set Back program for people with low mobility; and
- Option 3 – Recognition: A volunteer recognition program, modeled on a similar City Of Port Coquitlam and City Of Surrey program.

All options above include the continuation of the existing program that provides education about snow removal and encourages residents to help their neighbours.

Each of the three options was evaluated against three criteria:

- Cost: The cost to run and administer the program. This metric was further broken down into a cost per residence;
- Coverage: The % of homes that would like to receive support in clearing their sidewalks who would have their walks shovelled under the program; and
- Perceived Customer Service: The relationship between the likely expectation of service and the level of service that could be expected.

Results for each of the options are below.

Option 1 – City Volunteers.

Interviews were conducted with program officials at the City of Coquitlam in order to appropriately design a similar program. Based on these conversations, it was determined that a volunteer program would require significant administrative time and effort. Furthermore, these conversations identified the difficulty in recruiting volunteers and ensuring that all the demand for service was met. These poor outcomes were validated by conversations with the City of Port Coquitlam, who had piloted a similar program, but canceled it when they also discovered the high cost and low return of running the program. Ultimately, neither program was able to recruit sufficient volunteers to ensure the demand for service was met.

Annual Program Cost: High

% of demand met: 40%

Perceived Customer Service: Very Poor

This option performs especially poorly in customer service. There is a need to promote the program widely in order to maximise the number of volunteers, but this also drives up the expectation among low mobility homeowners that they will reliably get their walks shoveled, which has not shown to be the case.

Option 2 – City Staff

This program was considered in order to understand the costs of a program that could ensure 100% coverage. Despite the high level of coverage, pulling city staff away from high priority routes in order to shovel a small number of private sidewalks is poor customer service. This program is also likely to be more expensive than the volunteer program. Costs for this option are dependent on the number of snowfall events, whereas the cost to administer the Volunteer program exists regardless of snowfall events. In years with less than three snowfall days, having staff shovel sidewalks could be less expensive than the volunteer program, but this option runs a high risk of cost overrun if snowfall is at or above average.

Annual Program Cost: Very High
% of demand met: 100%
Perceived Customer Service: Poor

Option 3 – Recognition

This program recognises the people who are already volunteering to shovel their neighbour's sidewalk. Anyone can nominate a volunteer, and the City would provide this person with a Port Moody branded gift such as a toque. This option requires minimal administration and the cost of providing toques is also very small. As can be expected, there may only be a small increase in the number of residences whose walks get shovelled, but this program would not generate the expectation that everyone would get their walk shoveled.

Annual Program Cost: Low
% of demand met: 15%
Perceived Customer Service: Average

Given the high costs and poor customer service of Option 1 and Option 2, and the low coverage generated by Option 1, staff recommend that the City adopt Option 3.

Other Option(s)

1. THAT the report dated June 16, 2020 from the General Manager of Engineering and Operations regarding Residential Snow Clearing – Review of Volunteer Snow Shoveling Service be received for information.
2. THAT staff be directed to report back with further details on costs and potential implementation plans for Option 1.
3. THAT staff be directed to report back with further details on costs and potential implementation plans for Option 2.

Financial Implications

The expected cost to launch and run either the Option 1 or Option 2 program would be approximately \$10,000 to 15,000 annually. The expected cost to launch and run the Option 3 program is approximately \$500 annually and is expected to be able to be accommodated in the approved 2020 operations snow-clearing budget. Adjustments may be proposed by staff for the 2021 budget if required.

Communications and Civic Engagement Initiatives

A communication plan will be developed and implemented to promote the new recognition program and the new service will be incorporated into existing City communications.

Council Strategic Plan Objectives

Selecting Option 3 for the Snow and Ice Clearing program aligns with Council's 2019-2022 Strategic plan pillar of Economic Prosperity, specifically by ensuring fiscal responsibility by assessing and monitoring lifecycle expenses.

Report Author

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Report Approval Details

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| Attachments: | |
| Final Approval Date: | Jul 7, 2020 |

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Dorothy Shermer, Corporate Officer - Jun 29, 2020 - 10:48 AM

Rosemary Lodge, Manager of Communications and Engagement - Jun 29, 2020 - 11:40 AM

Paul Rockwood, General Manager of Finance and Technology - Jun 29, 2020 - 12:23 PM

Tim Savoie, City Manager - Jul 7, 2020 - 6:33 AM