
Council Subcommittee of Towing

Date

2016/11/07

Time

9:00 AM

Location

Civic Centre, Council Chamber,
300 City Centre Drive, Mississauga, Ontario, L5B 3C1 Ontario

Members

Councillor Ron Starr	Ward 6 (Chair)
Mayor Bonnie Crombie	
Councillor Carolyn Parrish	Ward 5
Councillor Nando Iannicca	Ward 7
Councillor Matt Mahoney	Ward 8 (Vice Chair)

Contact

Stephanie Smith, Legislative Coordinator, Legislative Services
905-615-3200 ext. 3795
stephanie.smith@mississauga.ca

Find it Online

<http://www.mississauga.ca/portal/cityhall/towingindustryadvisory>

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Declaration of Conflict of Interest
4. Minutes of Previous Meeting
- 4.1. Council Subcommittee of Towing Minutes - September 26, 2016
5. Matters to be Considered
- 5.1. Report on the Virtual Pound Technology
6. Adjournment

City of Mississauga
Minutes



Council Subcommittee of Towing

Date

2016/09/26

Time

10:03 AM

Location

Civic Centre, Council Chamber,
300 City Centre Drive, Mississauga, Ontario, L5B 3C1 Ontario

Members Present

Councillor Ron Starr, Ward 6 (Chair)
Mayor Bonnie Crombie
Councillor Carolyn Parrish, Ward 5 (Arrived 10:34am)
Councillor Nando Iannicca, Ward 7
Councillor Matt Mahoney, Ward 8 (Vice Chair)

Staff Present

Douglas Meehan, Acting Director, Enforcement
Daryl Bell, Manager, Mobile Licensing Enforcement
Stephanie Smith, Legislative Coordinator, Legislative Services

Find it online

<http://www.mississauga.ca/portal/cityhall/towingindustryadvisory>

1. Call to Order - 10:03 AM
2. Approval of Agenda
Approved (Councillor Mahoney)
3. Declaration of Conflict of Interest – Nil
4. Minutes of Previous Meeting
- 4.1. Council Subcommittee of Towing Minutes - May 30, 2016
Approved (Councillor Iannicca)

5. Matters Considered

- 5.1. Report on Tow Truck Chasing in the City of Mississauga

Michael Foley, Acting Manager, Compliance and Licensing presented background information on tow truck chasing in the City of Mississauga. He outlined previous amendments made to the Tow Truck Licensing By-law that had a significant impact on reducing chasing in the City of Mississauga. He further outlined future strategies that could be introduced to include; fleet management technology, private pounds - defined zones and private pounds – zoned. Mr. Foley concluded that the current rates of violations amongst licensed tow truck drivers have reached a historic low and that staff would bring back a supplementary report in two years to measure the effectiveness of the amendments to the City of Mississauga Tow Truck Licensing By-law.

Councillor Mahoney and Councillor Iannicca spoke to chasing currently not being an issue in the City of Mississauga, Bill 15 and enquired if a virtual pound and stricter enforcement on fewer pounds facilities would be neutrally exclusive. Daryl Bell, Manager, Mobile Licensing Enforcement spoke to the combination of fewer pounds and a virtual pound would allow staff to do a better job on enforcement.

Councillor Starr spoke to the positives and negatives of a fleet management system and that the City of Mississauga is the leader in the industry.

Dara Carpenter, ReadyTow Technologies spoke to the history of managing towing in the industry and outlined the functionalities of a web based mobile technology application

that could be created for the City of Mississauga.

Councillor Starr enquired about the approval process for the consumer. Ms. Carpenter noted that there is an electronic signature required of the consumer.

Councillor Iannicca enquired if Ms. Carpenter is already providing her mobile application to other companies or municipalities. She noted that an insurance company, repair facility and a fleet leasing company are already using her product.

Councillor Parrish asked Ms. Carpenter if the City would be better off having designated zoned pounds rather than one central dispatch system. Ms. Carpenter spoke to the challenges of designated zoned pounds and the lack of consumer choice. She further noted that her application could be created to allow designated pounds in the City of Mississauga and that this application is not a dispatch system. Councillor Parrish spoke to the benefits of the photo requirement of the application and the ability to see who is towing outside of the City of Mississauga.

Mayor Crombie spoke to the virtual pound, consumer choice and enquired why the City of Mississauga does not allow tow truck drivers to leave the boundaries of the City. Mr. Bell noted that the Tow Truck Licencing By-law does not allow cars to be towed to other municipalities unless requested by the consumer.

Councillor Mahoney spoke to the new amendments made to the by-law that requires tow truck drivers to take photos of a vehicle before being towed, the permission to tow forms and requirements to accept all forms of payments and enquired if the mobile application could be an all-inclusive solution. Mr. Bell noted that this application addresses the issues raised from the Towing Industry Advisory Committee.

Discussion ensued with respect to the cost of purchasing the application to the City of Mississauga and that there wouldn't be an additional cost to the tow truck drivers.

Councillor Parrish spoke to the privacy of the application. Ms. Carpenter noted that the information would be held on the City of Mississauga servers.

Councillor Iannicca spoke to the tow storage business and regulated pound facilities.

Mayor Crombie spoke to introducing new technology for the industry. Mr. Bell noted that staff would tender the mobile application and let companies come forward. Staff were directed to see what else is available for the industry.

John Lyons, Lyons Towing noted that he supports the mobile application and the need to define what a pound is.

Robert Fluney, Seneca Towing noted that chasing in the City of Mississauga is on the decline and that the positive change in the industry is due to Mr. Bell.

Councillor Parrish spoke to pound facilities being regulated. Mr. Bell noted that the Tow Truck Licensing By-law clearly outlines what is required to be a licensed pound facility.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the report from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works dated September 13, 2016 entitled "Report on Tow Truck Chasing in the City of Mississauga" be received for information.
2. That the Council Subcommittee on Chasing direct staff to produce a supplementary report in two years identifying trends in tow truck driver behaviour as measured by assessing the driver's abstracts and reported complaints of driver behaviour of licensed drivers, to measure the effectiveness of amendments to the City of Mississauga Tow Truck Licensing By-law, which was adopted in 2016 and in prior years.

Received (Mayor Crombie)
Recommendation CSOT-0001-2016

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the deputation by Dara Carpenter regarding the Ready Tow mobile application be received.
2. That a future Council Subcommittee of Towing meeting be scheduled to discuss technology based mobile towing applications.

Received (Mayor Crombie)
Recommendation CSOT-0002-2016

Adjournment – 11:17 AM (Mayor Crombie)

City of Mississauga Corporate Report



Date: 2016/10/24

To: Council Subcommittee of Towing

From: Geoff Wright, P. Eng, MBA, Commissioner of
Transportation and Works

Originator's files:

Meeting date:
2016/11/07

Subject

Report on the Virtual Pound Technology

Recommendation

That the report from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works dated, October 24, 2016 entitled "Report on Virtual Pound Technology", be received for information.

Report Highlights

- September 16, 2015 Council approved a direction to staff to implement a mandatory online towing and storage application.
- October 5, 2016 Council approved a recommendation from the Council Subcommittee on Tow Truck Chasing that staff report back in two years on the status of the industry.
- Staff were further directed to bring a report to the Council Subcommittee on Tow Truck Chasing with information for discussion on mobile towing applications.
- Virtual Pound Technology software has the ability to collect all information from a tow initiated in Mississauga and track it to the vehicle pound facility thus replacing the paper Permission to Tow form and electronically filing all documentation reducing paper and creating a process, which can be managed without additional staffing.
- Virtual Pound Technology software also has the ability to collect photos and payment methods, which have been a contentious issue with the industry due to concerns with cost.

Background

At its meeting of September 16, 2015 Council approved the following recommendation:

Council Subcommittee of Towing	2016/10/21	2
--------------------------------	------------	---

“GC-0186-2015

That the report from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works, dated March 22, 2016 entitled “Centralized Vehicle Pound Facility Feasibility Study – Final Report” be adopted in accordance with the following:

- 1. That Council amend the Tow Truck Licensing By-law 0521-2004, as amended, and Schedule 27 of Business Licensing By-law 0001-2006, as amended, to implement the Additional Regulations and Operating Procedures Alternative Option to a City owned and operated Centralized Vehicle Pound Facility to improve consumer protection, ensure that City By-laws conform with Provincial Bill 15 - Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act regulations, and to improve the City’s monitoring and auditing capabilities of the vehicle towing and storage industry;*
- 2. That City staff be directed to implement a mandatory on-line towing and storage software application to be used by the Enforcement Division of the Transportation and Works Department and the motor vehicle towing and storage industries in Mississauga, and that the development or acquisition of the mandatory on-line towing and storage software application be included in the 2017 Transportation and Works Technology Workplan;*
- 3. That Peel Regional Police and the local detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police be fully informed of the mandatory on-line towing and storage software application and that they be invited to assist in its planning, development and utilization; and,*
- 4. That Enforcement Division staff work with the Communications Division to implement a public communication plan to inform Mississauga residents about consumer rights when interacting with the towing and storage industry.*
- 5. That staff be directed to meet with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Towing Industry Advisory Committee, Mayor Crombie and Councillors Iannicca and Parrish to develop an interim pilot project that may include the following: divide the City into sections with a licensed pound in each section, an online towing system software and an administration fee of \$25 and further that staff report back to General Committee on the design of the pilot project.*
- 6. The purpose of this GC report was to address questions and the feasibility of a Centralized Vehicle Pound Facility and direct staff to implement an on-line towing and storage software.”*

At its meeting of October 5, 2016 Council approved the following recommendation:

Council Subcommittee of Towing	2016/10/21	3
--------------------------------	------------	---

“GC-0608-2016

1. *That the report from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works dated September 13, 2016 entitled “Report on Tow Truck Chasing in the City of Mississauga” be received for information.*
2. *That the Council Subcommittee on Chasing direct staff to produce a supplementary report in two years identifying trends in tow truck driver behaviour as measured by assessing the driver’s abstracts and reported complaints of driver behaviour of licensed drivers, to measure the effectiveness of amendments to the City of Mississauga Tow Truck Licensing By-law, which was adopted in 2016 and in prior years.
(CSOT-0001-2016)*

GC-0609-2016

1. *That the deputation by Dara Carpenter regarding the Ready Tow mobile application be received.*
2. *That a future Council Subcommittee of Towing meeting be scheduled to discuss technology based mobile towing applications.
(CSOT-0002-2016)”*

The purpose of this report is to provide the current status of the Tow Truck Industry and recommend further discussion of Towing and Storage Technology as a tool to assist with maintaining consumer protection and maintain the present model for towing and storage to be reviewed in two years.

Comments

The amendments to the Tow Truck Licensing By-law, 521-04, as amended, providing for the inclusion of mandatory Permission to Tow forms for all tows initiated in Mississauga, have resulted in proven consumer protection that holds all parties involved in the tow process accountable. Staff have been able to fully enforce the by-law, providing increased public confidence that the costs associated with a vehicle tow are compliant with the City’s by-laws.

Estimates provided in the 2015 report titled “Centralized Vehicle Pound Facility Feasibility Study - Recommendation Report” identified the number of tows yearly as being approximately 12,000. Since the amendment of May 11, 2015 requiring that a Permission to Tow form be completed for all tows, the City has distributed approximately 25,000 forms to the towing industry.

The industry has been diligent in completing these forms but have identified that the tracking, maintenance, and storage associated with hard copies of these forms presents challenges from both a space and the ongoing maintenance of paper files perspective.

Mobile Licensing Enforcement staff have also identified similar concerns including the volume of forms being submitted for tracking purposes, the time commitment required and the costs associated with the printing and distribution of these forms.

Staff have been made aware of the possibility of creating a database and mobile application which would be capable of replacing the Permission to Tow form and provide a comprehensive tracking system for towing and storage activities and the secure maintenance of the records electronically.

Virtual pound technology software has the capability to capture real time information for all towing and storage activity initiated within the City of Mississauga. This software would acquire all the information contained on the current Permission to Tow form, but through a smart phone/tablet application utilized by the tow truck operator. The software will have the ability to address other concerns such as photo collection and payment methods which have been a point of contention within the industry due to concerns with cost.

Data will be collected from the initiation of a tow and will be automatically transferred to the City database, where all information will be collected and stored to ensure compliance with all by-laws and in accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Privacy Act*.

This data, in conjunction with the use of the Global Positioning System (GPS) will allow the tracking of the vehicle from initial tow to destination and drop-off at a vehicle pound or a location as directed by the operator of the vehicle being towed.

Vehicle Pound Facilities will be required to provide information related to the release of the vehicle in accordance with the by-law and will establish verifiable timelines for activities related to the tow and storage.

Financial Impact

The initial costs related to the procurement of the software are estimated to be approximately \$50,000. There would also be fees associated with the maintenance of the software by the vendor. The costs would be partially offset by savings created through the elimination of printing and distribution costs associated with the Permission to Tow forms and reduced staff time required for records maintenance. Further cost recovery could be achieved through a nominal user fee for the mobile application.

A budget request is proposed for the 2017 budget that identifies a one year contract project coordinator to "identify appropriate software solutions, coordinate the acquisition of software and

integrate the application into the enforcement protocol. The total budget request for software and a one year contract project co-ordinator position is \$189,000.

Conclusion

Staff recommend that through consultation with Information Technology (IT), that either an in-house software be developed or that a Request for Proposal (RFP) be created outlining all the requirements for a towing and storage program and mobile application. In the event that staff determine that the best course of action is an open market product, staff further recommend that the RFP be made to the public to allow companies with the technology, to bid with the intentions to have the virtual pound in place in 2017.



Geoff Wright, P. Eng, MBA, Commissioner of Transportation and Works

Prepared by: Daryl Bell, Manager, Mobile Licensing Enforcement