



Legislation Text

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7.3

Bylaw 29/2021 Amendment to City of St. Albert Land Use Bylaw 9/2005, Schedule C, Sign Regulations

Presented by: Colin Krywiak, Manager, Development Branch

RECOMMENDED MOTIONS

Land Use Bylaw

1. That Bylaw 29/2021 being amendment 196 to the Land Use Bylaw 9/2005, Schedule C (Sign Regulations), Section 18(g) Portable Sign, to increase the validity of a portable sign permit from 90 days to 180 days, be read a first time.
2. That the Public Hearing on Bylaw 29/2021 be scheduled for May 31, 2021.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of the amendment to the Land Use Bylaw is to implement an internally driven green tape initiative, by increasing portable sign permit validity duration, therefore reducing the requirement to re-apply for a portable sign permit from every 90 days to every 180 days.

An amendment(s) to the Master Rates Bylaw, Schedule E - Development Permits, increasing the fee(s) for portable signs (3(h)) is planned to be presented to Council on May 31, 2021.

ALIGNMENT TO PRIORITIES IN COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Priority #2: Economic Development: Enhance business/commercial growth.

The proposed amendment could encourage more businesses to invest in a portable sign to advertise, as a sign permit application requirement every 180 days is more convenient than a new permit application every 90 days, and more efficient to manage. This is an initiative that will potentially enhance more business advertising and subsequently, revenue generation for businesses within the City of St. Albert.

ALIGNMENT TO LEVELS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

Development Service

Service Name: Development, Building Permit Application Review and Enforcement.

Service Definition: Review and processing of applications for approval and enforcement of Land Use Bylaw. The service includes review of new development and infill related infrastructure required to service lands and traffic related data with growth.

Service Component: Development Permit Application Review

Current Service Level: Responding to applicants within 20 days to verify completeness of their application. Application processing time is 40 days following the formal acceptance of the application.

ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL DIRECTION OR MANDATORY STATUTORY PROVISION

The Land Use Bylaw amendment process is being heard by Council in alignment with the Municipal Government Act, RSA 2000.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Through internal Development Branch discussion, it was identified that Development Officer efficiencies would increase with a portable sign permit validity adjustment from 90 days to 180 days. The efficiencies would allow the development officer time to focus on other projects, and increase service levels, both internally and externally.

From 2007 to end of year 2020, the average number of portable sign approvals per year was 306. Currently, portable sign permits expire every 90 days. With the proposed amendment to extend expiry of portable sign permits to 180 days, approximately 153 portable sign permits would be processed annually, down from 306 average annually.

This proposed change is anticipated to significantly reduce the amount of time the Development Branch spends on sign permit processing time, which can then be applied to higher priority applications and projects.

52 portable sign permits have been approved in 2021 as of March 18, 2021.

The required amendment to the Master Rates Bylaw associated with this proposed Land Use Bylaw Amendment will proceed to Council on May 31, 2021 to coincide with the Public Hearing and 2nd/3rd reading.

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS OR ENGAGEMENT

The public hearing serves as the opportunity for public and stakeholder input. No other engagement has taken place.

IMPLICATIONS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

Financial:

The current fee for a 90-day portable sign permit is \$161. In 2020, the Development Branch collected \$39,658 in portable sign permit fees on 251 portable sign permits. The amendment to

extend the validity of a portable sign permit to 180 days from the current 90 days would result in an approximate 50% loss in revenue without a fee adjustment. Consequently, Administration has proposed an increase to the Master Rates Bylaw, Schedule E for portable sign fees to be increased to \$260 for an 180-day permit. This proposed amendment passes along application time savings and monetary savings to portable sign permit applicants, while allowing the City to retain a significant proportion of the portable sign permit fees, and gaining substantial savings in application review time that can then be applied to higher priority projects and applications.

Assuming that portable sign demand returns to the 12-year average, the anticipated revenue based on the proposed fee of \$260, would be ~\$39,780 annually. It is anticipated that any loss in revenue will be mitigated by process improvement and an increase in service levels, benefitting both internal and external customers.

Legal / Risk:

None at this time.

Program or Service:

An increase in administration time savings, and customer satisfaction both internally and externally.

Organizational:

This amendment is anticipated to free up resources and workload of the Development Branch to then be able to work on higher priority applications and projects as part of an internally driven green tape initiative.

ALTERNATIVES AND IMPLICATIONS CONSIDERED

When considering opportunities for operational efficiency and reducing the amount of time spent processing sign permit applications, Administration also discussed the possibility of creating the opportunity to purchase an annual permit as an alternative to the 180-day permit. For those businesses that continually renew their sign permits annually, the year-option could be more attractive than the 180-day option, while retaining the 180-day option would retain the ability of those businesses that only want signage for a portion of the year to meet their business demands, while saving money in application fees, and time spent on applications. It is estimated that a majority of temporary sign permit holders currently apply four times/year for annual coverage. Administration did not propose the annual permit option out of an abundance of caution, but is not opposed to the concept.

If Council were interested in implementing an annual portable sign permit option in addition to the 180-day option being presented, Administration would recommend that the fee for an annual portable sign permit would be set at \$460.

If Council does not wish to support the recommendation, the following alternatives could be considered:

Alternative 1. Do nothing. Portable sign fees would remain valid for 90 days at the rate of \$161 per renewal, and require up to four renewals per year.

Alternative 2. Approve the original motion extending the 90-day portable sign permit validity to 180 days, and make an additional amendment to enable an annual portable sign permit as well. The motion would read as follows:

that Bylaw 29/2021 being amendment 196 to the Land Use Bylaw 9/2005, Schedule C (Sign Regulations), Section 18(g) Portable Sign, to increase the validity of a portable sign permit from 90 days to 180 days, and to add an annual portable sign permit option, be read a first time.

Report Date: May 3, 2021

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