

Staff Report

Report To: Corporate Services Committee
Report From: Christine Gilbert, Deputy Treasurer
Meeting Date: July 11, 2024
Report Code: CR-24-078
Subject: Electronic Donations Options

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CR-24-078 respecting Electronic Donation Options, the Corporate Services Committee recommends that City Council receive the report for information purposes.

Highlights:

- Previously, donations to the City were primarily completed in-person or via cheque, with little to no electronic options.
- City staff have worked to implement three different electronic donation avenues, including TipTapPay, Canada Helps, and DocuPet.
- These initiatives should increase overall donation volumes, simplify the donor experience, as well as provide multiple touchpoints and opportunities for residents to support City projects and initiatives at their convenience.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: Collaborative City.

Climate and Environmental Implications:

This supports the objectives of the City's Corporate Climate Change Adaptation Plan by strengthening the resiliency of City infrastructure or services.

Previous Report/Authority:

Service Review Implementation Ad Hoc Committee [3a6 Increase Online Services – Project Update](#)

Background:

As part of regular improvements to operations and through the focus on service review initiative 3a6, City Staff have remained committed to increasing access to City services and thinking outside of the box to increase revenue sources.

Service review initiative 3a6 focuses on increasing and expanding the use of online services to enhance opportunities for the public to access services when and where they need to, by utilizing the City's existing abilities and focusing on easy to implement solutions.

Through this continuous improvement mindset, as well as implementing staff recommendations of best practices from other local organizations, City staff are pleased to present that the City now has an increased ability for local ratepayers and citizens to contribute directly to causes that they care about.

Previously, the City has been confined by primarily in person or cheque payments for donations. For example:

- General donations have been accepted at City Hall through cash, debit, or cheque.
- Donations to the Owen Sound Animal Shelter have been accepted in-person or by cheque. E-transfer is also accepted; however, they are difficult to track and gather the appropriate information required for the donation receipt.
- Cash donations at City events (primarily coin).
- The Tom Thomson Art Gallery has moved the needle to electronic the furthest, with donations being accepted in person or online via Art Gallery Patron's Xplor Recreation accounts.

In addition to these manual processes, the donation receipt itself is also an administrative burden where each donation must be keyed in manually to a donation receipt template, reconciled to a donation batch, and then signed by the Treasurer or Deputy Treasurer.

Analysis:

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, electronic donations skyrocketed as the use of cash dwindled. Since then, there has been an increasing demand for the ability to accept donations electronically in addition to collecting them in the locations where the donations will be used.

Therefore, City Staff have implemented three new donation avenues for ratepayers and visitors to Owen Sound, including:

TipTapPay

- TipTapPay terminals are a version of tap-to-donate terminals where people can donate directly by tapping a debit card, credit card, or their phone.
- The amounts are preset and are determined when the terminals are ordered.
- Additional features, such as product stands, battery charges, donation posters, etc., can be ordered for the terminals.
- Currently, the City has purchased two TipTapPay terminals. One will remain at the Tom Thomson Art Gallery, and the other will be used for City events in the summer and at the Owen Sound Animal Shelter in the winter.
- Over the 12 days these terminals have been live, \$395.00 has been raised in donations at the time of report writing, via 40 separate taps. These occurred primarily at the Tom Thomson Art Gallery with a few at Harbour Nights as well.
- There are small initial set-up fees and small monthly operational fees for these terminals (\$35/tap button), but the donations have already surpassed the monthly costs.
- To increase visibility and accessibility, the terminals will be placed in high-traffic areas to ensure maximum reach and convenience.
- This will be a pilot project to test the effectiveness of these tap-to-donate terminals, and they may be expanded to other high-traffic municipal facilities.

Canada Helps

- The City's Canada Helps listing can be found here: [city-of-owen-sound | CharityProfile | Donate Online \(canadahelps.org\)](#)
- City staff have recently completed the verification process to be registered under the accredited Canada Helps charity listing.
- This is an online donation registry where people can donate directly to the City on either a one-time or recurring basis.
- The Canada Helps website provides an intuitive interface that is available 24/7, making it easier for donors to contribute at their convenience.
- Tax receipts are automatically prepared by the organization on the City's behalf and are emailed to the donor on an immediate or annual basis, depending on their preference.
- Donors can choose to donate to more than one charity at a time and can set up automatic donations from their accounts, similar to the payroll donation deductions that used to be more prevalent.
- Canada Helps provides the ability to run fundraising campaigns, and this could be used as part of a broader communication and funding strategy in the future (e.g., for local community events, capital projects near to resident's hearts, etc.).
- Other benefits include the reduced administration of manual donation receipts (including time spent ensuring we are compliant with CRA donation regulations) as well as the donations being deposited electronically as they are received.
- There are small fees (4%) taken out of the donation to the City, but the donor receives a tax receipt for the full amount and the fees are net when the funds are deposited electronically to the City's accounts.

DocuPet

- Beginning in the Fall of 2024, the City will be using DocuPet as their animal licensing software.
- At the time of the animal license purchase (or renewal), ratepayers will have the ability to donate directly to the Owen Sound Animal Shelter.
- This allows the opportunity for ratepayers to contribute while completing routine transactions, which increases the likelihood of donations.

- The funds would then be remitted electronically to the City’s bank account and a manual donation receipt would be processed (if requested).
- Additionally, 20% of every product purchased through DocuPet (designer tags, collars, or leashes) is donated to DocuPet’s Safe&Happy Fund, which will be provided to the City as an annualized lump sum donation to the Owen Sound Animal Shelter.
- This fund has provided donations to over 30 shelters across North America, including the Guelph Humane Society and Niagara SPCA.

Implications

- Implementing these systems will likely result in higher engagement and contributions from the community.
- Residents are provided with diverse and accessible methods to support local initiatives, which could lead to increased financial support for City programs, particularly those related to the arts and animal welfare.
- These initiatives were developed with little to no cost to the City, which increases the upside benefit and allows the City to trial these as a pilot to see if they can be expanded to future areas.
- There is the potential to expand the tap-to-donate program to other high-traffic municipal facilities.
- There is also the potential for the City to run fundraising campaigns targeting specific projects or initiatives.
- The options provide a secure and convenient way to donate while reducing the administrative burden of manual or cash donations.

Financial Implications:

Both Canada Gives and DocuPet have no setup fee. A small amount of the donation is retained by the organization to cover processes and administrative fees, but the net impact of the increased donations combined with the decrease in administrative costs still results in a financially positive situation.

TipTapPay has a small set-up cost for the terminals (less than \$500) and has immaterial monthly operating costs (\$35/button/month).

Overall, this should increase donation revenue by providing alternative ways of service delivery.

Communication Strategy:

Media releases, social media posts and a further communication plan will be developed in addition to targeted communications regarding fundraising campaigns if desired.

Consultation:

N/A

Attachments:

1. TipTapPay Information Slides
2. Canada Helps – Online Portal View

Recommended by:

Christine Gilbert, Deputy Treasurer

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Christine Gilbert, Deputy Treasurer at cgilbert@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 ext. 1223.