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By Richard Vivian | Aug 11, 2010 - 8:01 PM | 0

Mono leaves bylaw fees in judge's hands

The penalty for letting goats roam freely in Mono may soon change. Town council is in the midst of updating many of its bylaws in an effort to make them easier to enforce.

"We've been looking to take it to a short-form bylaw which would allow, for instance animals at large, for the SPCA to write tickets as opposed to going to court," explained Mark Early, Mono's director of planning.

This is council's fourth kick at the preverbal can. It's been about 18 months since the town set out to increase fines levied against bylaw breakers, without success.

The first two attempts failed to garner government approval and a judge, who must agree with fine levels before they come into effect, recently squashed the third.

"The issue was all the fines were set at \$250, which we think is a reasonable price when you look at what we pay to have staff time involved and a bylaw enforcement officer involved and potentially someone running to court after it," Early said.

Mono doesn't have a dedicated bylaw enforcement officer, opting instead to contract the services of Dufferin County.

That individual is also responsible for following up on bylaw issues in Amaranth, East Garafraxa, East Luther Grand Valley, Melancthon and Mulmur.

As a result, bylaw enforcement is "thinly spread and there is a high potential for bylaw violations to go undetected," town lawyer David Germain said in a letter to Justice Kathryn Hawke, the reviewing judge. "Therefore, it is the town's view that set fines can only function as an effective deterrent under these circumstances if they are substantial enough to overcome the reality that most violations will go undetected."

In that letter, council proposes to set the fine for some bylaw infractions at lesser amounts — for example, a \$150 ticket to people caught allowing a goat to run at large and \$155 for breaking noise restrictions. It also requests the fines be set at \$250 for such things as illegal garbage disposal and having a gun at a community park.

"Lets make it right as quickly as possible," Deputy Mayor Ken McGhee said of why council is asking the judge to make changes if the latest proposal isn't acceptable. "You can go back and forth a lot of times."

It's not known when the judge's response will be received. If the amounts are changed, council will have to formally approve their new amounts.

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