



The Town of Niagara-On-The-Lake

Operations
Telephone (905) 468-3266
Facsimile (905) 468-2959

1593 Four Mile Creek Road
P.O. Box 190
Virgil, Ontario
L0S 1T0

Report: OPS-22-004 **Committee Date:** February 14, 2022

Due in Council: February 28, 2022

Report To: Operations Advisory Committee
Subject: Grinder Pump Recommendations

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is respectfully recommended that:

- 1.1 Council approve the implementation of process improvements when addressing grinder pumps on low-pressure sewage systems, as detailed in the Staff comments in Section 4 of this report;
- 1.2 Council direct Staff to implement approved changes through the updating of the Sewer use By-law and associated policies and procedures; and
- 1.3 Council dissolve the Grinder Pump Committee as the work of this Committee has concluded.

2. PURPOSE / PROPOSAL

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with Staff's comments and recommendations related to the Grinder Pump Committee's final report, as per Council's direction of October 25, 2021.

At the October 25, 2021, Council meeting, the following motion was ratified from the Committee of the Whole General Meeting of October 18, 2021:

"that the September 22, 2021 Grinder Pump Committee minutes and recommendations be referred to Staff for a further report on the Grinder Pump Committee's recommendations and Staff report back to Council in Q1 of 2022 with costs."

3. BACKGROUND

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake installed a low-pressure sewer system (LPSS) in the Bevan Heights subdivision in 2005, as directed by the Ministry of the Environment (MOE). Since then, the Town has acquired other areas where low-pressure sewer systems have been developed.

Grinder pump systems (which are considered home appliances) have had some problems with maintenance and operation and a lack of understanding of how the systems are operated. Residents who own these systems have expressed a desire to have the Town take a more proactive approach in assisting them in dealing with grinder pumps.

Through Council's direction, Town Staff investigated an assistance program called Service Line Warranties promoted by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO). Town Staff was directed through Report No. OPS-15-031 to broker a contract with this insurance company. Service Line Warranties is a private insurance company that works with various municipalities to assist residents with grinder pumps and other infrastructure.

Report No. OPS-15-031(Appendix VI) initially identified 86 homes that qualified for the Service Line Warranties insurance reimbursement. The reimbursement program at that time was set out for original owners for as long as they owned the homes. Once sold, the insurance would not be available as a reimbursement. At that time, 86 properties qualified for the reimbursement, and 11 residents took advantage of the program. Today, 33 properties qualify for the reimbursement, and seven residents have taken advantage of the program.

The Grinder Pump Committee was formed at the beginning of the 2018 term of Council due to the volume of resident concerns brought forward concerning grinder pumps. As outlined in the Grinder Pump Committee's Terms of Reference, the mandate of this committee is to investigate options available for the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake to offer assistance to residents who own grinder pumps.

Since 2018, the Grinder Pump Committee has provided a thorough review of various situations found in other comparable areas within North America, with a final focus on areas in Ontario. The following presentations and reports were submitted to Council on various dates:

- Council GP Workshop Presentation PRINT version Final 08-14-2019 (Appendix III)
- Executive Summary Working Group final draft (Appendix IV)
- GP Committee Final Report (Appendix V)

As a result of the questions and concerns brought up by the Grinder Pump Committee, Town Staff consulted with Legal Counsel and a local engineering firm that specializes in sewage pumping systems.

RV Anderson and Associates Ltd. was retained to provide the independent review of the technical questions supplied by the Grinder Pump Committee.

Daniel & Partners LLP was retained for a legal opinion on whether the Town should

assume responsibility for maintaining and replacing all grinder pumps that are part of the low-pressure sewer system. Their review memo is attached as Appendix VI - St. Davids Sewage System Memo March 17, 2021.

On October 18, 2021, the Grinder Pump's last Committee of the Whole presentation outlined eight recommendations. With these recommendations, the Grinder Pump Committee considered the findings of the RV Anderson report dated December 7, 2020. The RV Anderson report, without all of the associated drawings, is attached to this report as Appendix I - 20210219-R-pressure-sewers. (The full document from RV Anderson is over 300 pages. However, if Council wants a complete copy including all maps and drawings, the Clerk can distribute the complete package separately.)

Staff recommends dissolving the Grinder Pump Committee because they have met the Terms of Reference and concluded their work through the detailed investigations and reports prepared. Clerk Version - Draft Terms of Reference - Grinder Pump Committee is attached as Appendix II.

4. DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

The Grinder Pump Committee brought forward the following recommendations. Staff comments are identified below the respective recommendation.

Recommendation I:

Town Staff to create an Operations and Maintenance Manual for the LPSS in accordance with R.V.Anderson Associates Limited (RVA) recommendations.

Staff comment:

Each system currently has an Environmental Compliance Approval (ECA) approved and issued by the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP).

All low-pressure sewage systems (LPSS) have operation and maintenance manuals as part of the submissions to the Town. If no operation and maintenance manuals exist, the Town will create one.

Recommendation II:

Town Staff to create a regular maintenance program to flush municipally-owned LPSS mains per RVA recommendations and to fully fund same under the Town's Works Budget.

Staff comment:

The Town is committed to performing regular maintenance according to the existing operational and maintenance manuals and/or RVA recommendations. Town Staff has been working on flushing and maintaining these systems over the past few months.

Recommendation III:

Town Staff to maintain an emergency critical parts inventory of key LPSS components such as at least two spare pumps and two spare controllers. These critical components are to be made available to homeowners with grinder

pumps to purchase at cost from the Town after hours and on weekends when the commercial parts providers are not available, per the RVA recommendations.

Staff comment:

The Town has stocked two spare pumps and one spare controller for emergency installations. The Town has stocked two grinder pumps and one electrical unit from the main pump supplier, EOne. EOne has advised that the stored pump in the Town Yard, once installed, will provide the owner with a 2-year warranty from the date of installation. Residents with pumps installed by other manufacturers will be required to source them out independently. The Town's recommendation is to only stock parts where a warranty is available to residents.

Recommendation IV:

Town Staff to liaise with the insurance provider (Service Line Warranties) regarding authorized service contractor(s) to improve responsiveness and advise of emergency parts inventory and access procedures.

Staff comment:

The Town can not dictate how independent businesses operate; however, Staff has and will continue to provide comments and recommendations for local suppliers.

Recommendation V:

Town Staff to distribute guidelines to residents with grinder pumps as to the proper use and care of their grinder pumps and contact information for emergency service. The distribution of this material could be with the residents' water and sewage bills and posted online on the Town's web and social media sites. This is consistent with RVA's fourth recommendation.

Staff comment:

Where the Town has LPSSs, Staff will provide a mail-out and post on the Town's website and social media sites.

Recommendation VI:

Town Staff to establish a robust program of inspection and installation approval before occupancy for any future new residential units that utilize grinder pumps. The program is to include sign-off and inspection from both builder and town staff.

Staff comment:

Staff recommend that the developer/homeowner provides an approval sign-off for the pump, tank, and the specifications to confirm meets the engineering specifications. It would be the responsibility of the developer and/or homeowner to obtain approval from the Manufacturer to verify if the pump and tank are installed correctly to engineering specifications. Building Staff will only be inspecting connection points related to the Ontario Building Code before occupancy. They will ensure a certificate of installation of the pump and the tank from the pump manufacturer moving forward.

Recommendation VII:

Town to reimburse grinder pump owners for the cost of insurance, currently approximately \$75 per user or \$14,000 annually for the current system.

Staff comment:

In accordance with the legal opinion of the Town's solicitor, Staff recommends that these pumps remain in the ownership of the private residence and be considered a personal home appliance, not part of the municipal system. The legal opinion is attached as Appendix VI to this report.

Recommendation VIII:

Town to update By-law No. 2758-94 to include Low-Pressure Sewage Systems inclusive of grinder pumps.

Staff comment:

By-law No. 2758-94 is scheduled to be updated in the first quarter of 2022.

5. Strategic Plan

- ☒ **Protect Distinctive Community Assets**
 - ☐ Preserve unique community elements
 - ☐ Close gap on capital investments
 - ☐ Recognize the importance of tourism in Niagara-on-the-Lake
 - ☒ Other
- ☒ **Strengthen 2-Way Communications**
 - ☒ Develop education plans to inform residents
 - ☐ Create a communications matrix
 - ☒ Strengthen communications delivery methods
 - ☐ Other
- ☐ **Not Applicable**

6. OPTIONS

- 6.1. **Option 1:** Council approves Staff recommendations as detailed in this report, including a majority of the recommendations of the Grinder Pump Committee.
(As Recommended)
- 6.2. **Option 2:** Council does not approve the Staff recommendations as detailed in this report and directs Staff to implement further recommendations of the Grinder Pump Committee or other changes.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Maintenance of the LPSS will be done through the operating budget through sanitary sewer flushing. There are no additional costs for the maintenance of the systems as it is included under the existing Sewer works program. The only financial impact is

maintaining the pump and controller inventory if this becomes standard practice. Should residents require anything from the Town inventory, they will be invoiced accordingly for the associated costs.

The Town maintains a budget for Sewer Line Warranty reimbursements for \$7,000 (Cost Centre 720-5160) and a budget for sewer main cleaning and flushing for \$59,510 (Cost Centre 720-5050) under the Town's wastewater budget. These items are funded through user rates. Should recommendation VII be approved by Council outside of Staff recommendations, it will double the Sewer Line Warranty budget to \$14,000.

8. COMMUNICATIONS

Should Council support Staff's recommendation to dissolve the Grinder Pump Committee, Staff will notify Committee members in writing, thanking them for their time and dedication to the function and service of grinder pumps within the Town.

The Town has partnered with Service Line Warranties of Canada (SLWC) to offer protection for homeowners for external water service lines. Residential properties within Niagara-on-the-Lake that front municipally-owned water mains may receive up to three letters annually regarding insurance options for the portion of their water service on private property. The protection is voluntary and available at affordable monthly or annual prices.

Town Staff post SLWC notices on the Town's social media pages and website to advise residents when mail-outs are expected. Customer Experience Staff are also notified of mail-out dates and given the appropriate information and messaging needed to support them in responding to calls and questions about the program. Callers are redirected to Service Line Warranties when required. These efforts will continue.

9. CONCLUSION

The Grinder Pump Committee has worked diligently to fulfill the Committee's mandate, and their hard work is appreciated.

Staff present this report as information for Council and recommend updating the Sewer Use By-law and associated policies and procedures to reflect the recommendations and details outlined in this report. Town Staff is of the opinion these are the best options for the municipality to support residents who have grinder pumps connected to a low-pressure sewer system.

Respectfully submitted,



Brett Ruck
Irrigation & Drainage Superintendent



Sheldon Randall
Director of Operations



Marnie Cluckie, MS.LOD, B.ARCH, B.ES
Chief Administrative Officer

First Capital of Upper Canada - 1792