

# THE MUNICIPAL DOG POUND BOARD

## COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

### 1. POLICY STATEMENT:

The Municipal Dog Pound Board (the “Board”) is committed to providing excellent service to all members of the public. The Board has implemented a consistent, efficient, fair, and uniform process to respond to complaints received regarding dissatisfaction with Board programs, facilities, services, employees, or operational procedures.

The Complaint Policy (the “Policy”) will assist the Board in continuing to provide excellent service to the public and will contribute to the continuous improvement of Board services and operations. The Board strives to maintain a high level of customer satisfaction by:

- Providing a timely and comprehensive response to complaints
- Using complaints as an opportunity to improve Board services and operations.

### 2. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this Policy is to establish guidelines and standards for the efficient handling and resolution of complaints made toward the Board in order to address concerns raised and improve the Board’s services and operations.

### 3. DEFINITIONS:

“**Board**” means the Municipal Dog Pound Board

“**Complaint**” means an expression of dissatisfaction related to a Board program, service, facility, operational procedure, or employee where members of the public believes that the Board has not provided a services experience to the citizen’s satisfaction at the point of service delivery and a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected. Complaints are distinct from request for service; general inquiries about Board services; opinions or feedback with respect to a program or service; or suggestions with respect to services or programs.

“**Complainant**” means the person who is dissatisfied and filing the complaint with the Board.

“**Secretary**” means the Secretary for the Municipal Dog Pound Board.

“**Employee**” means an employee of the Municipal Dog Pound Board.

“**Frivolous**” complaint means one that has no serious purpose or value, is about a matter so trivial or on so meritless on its face that any investigation would be disproportionate in terms of the us of resources.

“**Vexatious**” complaint means that the complaint is initiated with the potential intent to embarrass or annoy the recipient or is part of a pattern of conduct by the complainant that amounts to an abuse of the complaint process.

#### 4. TYPES OF COMPLAINTS:

The following are examples of Complaints covered by this policy:

- Concern that a matter was not completed or carried out in accordance with Board policies or standards (i.e. Dog was not impounded for the required number of days before being adopted in accordance with the Board's Standard Operating Procedures).
- Receiving poor customer service (i.e. poor interaction with a Board employee).
- The timeliness through with a service was provided (i.e. delay in issuing notification to the public that Dog was available for adoption or beyond the Board's Standard Operating Procedures).
- The quality of a service provided (i.e. response to inquiry about a dog available for adoption was not provided in a friendly or courteous manner).

This Policy applies to complaints that are received from members of the public regarding all Board programs, facilities, services, operational procedures, or employees.

A Complaint is distinct from:

- A request for service made on behalf of a citizen for a specific service.
- A general enquiry or specific request for information regarding a Board service.
- A request to increase service levels or provide a new service.
- An opinion or feedback, comment, and expression of interest in a program or service.
- An expression or approval or compliment for Board staff member, program, product, or process; and,
- A suggestion or idea submitted with the aim of improving services, programs, products, or processes.

The following Complaints will not be accepted or investigated in accordance with this Policy:

- A Frivolous or Vexatious Complaint:
- Anonymous Complaints.
- Complaints regarding a decision or recommendation of the Board.
- Complaints against a Member of the Board for matters subject to a Code of Conduct duly approved by each Municipality that is a member of the Board (subject to review by each member Municipalities appointed Integrity Commissioner, or in lieu thereof, by their Council).
- Complaints regarding whether a meeting of the Board was properly held in accordance with the Municipal Act (subject to review by the Ontario Ombudsman).
- Complaints which involve ongoing litigation.

- Any decision, recommendation, act, or omission of any person acting as a legal adviser to the Board or acting as counsel to them in relation to any proceedings.
- The outcome of an insurance claim processed by the Board's insurer.
- Matters addressed by legislation, regulation, or an existing Board By-Law.
- Matters that are handled by tribunals, courts or law, quasi-judicial boards, etc.
- Any decision, recommendation, act or omission by the Board, in respect of which there is, under any Act, a right to appeal or objection, or a right to apply for a hearing or review, on the merits of the case to any court, or to any tribunal constituted by or under any Act.

## **5. PROCEDURES:**

### **5.1 Informal Complaint**

The Board encourages informal and early resolution of Complaints in all circumstances.

It is recommended that a Complainant first directly contact a representative for the Board. The Complainant may contact any such representative by meeting with them in person, through mail, email or by telephone.

It is expected that Board Staff will use their best efforts to resolve these Informal Complaints before they become Formal Complaints (as defined hereinafter), and after the resolution of such Informal Complaints, identify possible improvements in Board services and operations. The majority of Complaints can be resolved promptly by the Board Staff.

### **5.2 Formal Complaint**

A Formal Complaint is generated when an informal resolution could not be successfully achieved. Formal Complaints will be submitted to the Secretary on the Board Complaint Form attached as Appendix "A." All such Complaints must be dated and signed by an identifiable individual. Anonymous Complaints shall not be accepted as they are difficult, if not impossible, to assess or investigate.

The Secretary will log the Formal Complaint and forward it to the Chairperson of the Board for further direction and retain a copy for the file.

### **5.3 Investigation**

- a) The Secretary shall acknowledge receipt of the Complaint within five (5) business days.
- b) The Secretary shall review the issues identified by the Complainant and in so doing may:
  - i. Review relevant Board and Provincial Legislation.
  - ii. Review the Board's relevant policies and procedures.
  - iii. Review any existing file documents.
  - iv. Request information from the Staff, the Complainant, or other members of the public involved in the Complaint.

- v. Identify actions that may be taken to address the Complaint and/or improve Board services and operations; or
  - vi. Take other actions the Secretary deems necessary to resolving the matter.
- c) Upon receipt of a Complaint, and where the Secretary deems appropriate, the Secretary may delegate the authority to investigate and respond to a Complaint to the appropriate Board member or other designate or may choose to investigate and respond to the Complaint themselves (the “Designated Investigator”).
  - d) The Secretary may not delegate the authority to investigate a Complaint to any Staff who is or may be named in the Complaint.
  - e) The Secretary shall maintain a file of the Complaint in compliance with the Board’s Records Retention Schedule.
  - f) Any Complaint of Employee misconduct shall be forwarded in confidence to the Secretary and shall be addressed by the Board as a whole. In the event Employee misconduct is found, the appropriate responsive action shall be taken, however any such responsive action shall remain confidential and shall not be disclosed to the Complainant or the public.

The Designated Investigator shall:

- Document all notes within the Board Complaint Tracking Form
- Contact the Complainant where a quick resolution is possible.
- Notify the Complainant in writing on an approximate length of time if it is determined the issue may result in a lengthy investigation process.
- Review the issues identified by the Complainant and in doing so may:
  - Review relevant Board and Provincial Legislation.
  - Review the Board’s relevant policies and procedures.
  - Interview Board employees.
  - Contact and interview members of the public.
  - Contact and interview the Complainant.
  - Identify actions that may be taken to address the Complaint or improve Board service and operations.

At the discretion of the Secretary, the Board may be notified of a complaint for information purposes only.

## **6. FRIVOLOUS OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS**

When determining whether a Complaint is Frivolous or Vexatious, the Board will take into account all the circumstances of the Complaint. The key question is whether the request is likely to cause distress, disruption, or irritation, without proper or justified cause.

A Complaint may be considered Frivolous or Vexatious if it meets the definitions of Frivolous and Vexatious as outlined in this Policy. For example, if a pattern of conduct occurs when, on more than one occasion, a Complainant engages in conduct such as the following:

- a) brings Complaints concerning an issue, which Staff have already investigated and determined to be groundless

- b) engages in unreasonable conduct, which is abusive of the Complaints process, i.e. harassing or verbal abuse
- c) making excessive or multiple lines of enquiry regarding the same issue while their Complaint is in the process of being investigated
- d) repeatedly challenging the findings of a Complaint Investigation, complaining about the outcome, or denying that an adequate response has been given
- e) refusing to accept that an issue falls outside the scope of the Board's jurisdiction
- f) making unreasonable demands of Staff, insisting on responses within an unreasonable timeframe
- g) using new Complaints to resurrect issues, which were investigated and completed in previous Complaints
- h) changing the basis of the Complaint as the investigation progresses and/or denying statements he/she made at an earlier stage
- i) refusing to co-operate with the investigation process while still wanting their Complaint to be resolved
- j) failing to clearly identify the precise issues of the Complaint, despite reasonable efforts of Staff to help them clarify their concerns

It is important to note that the above is not an exhaustive list of conduct which may be considered Frivolous or Vexatious. In addition, a single incident may also constitute a Frivolous or Vexatious Complaint.

Where a Complaint is considered to be Frivolous or Vexatious, or where a pattern of conduct constitutes Frivolous or Vexatious Complaints, the Secretary or designate, may cease any further investigation into the Complaint and close the Complainant's file.

## **7. DECISION**

7.1 Within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of a Complaint by the Secretary, a response shall be provided in writing to the Complainant (the "Decision").

The Decision shall include:

- i. Whether the Complaint was substantiated.
- ii. If the Complaint is not substantiated, the Secretary shall provide the reason(s) for their decision; and,
- iii. Any actions the Board had or will take because of the Complaint. In the case of an employee related complaint, the Board will not disclose the action taken.

7.2 From time to time, there may arise circumstances where the Board may not be in a position to guarantee response times. If the Secretary is unable to provide a Decision within thirty (30) days of receipt, they shall notify the Complainant of the delay and provide an estimate of when a Decision will be provided.

Decisions made by the Secretary may be appealed, in writing, to the Chairperson of the Board within thirty (30) days. The Chairperson of the Board shall review the appeal and may confirm,

rescind or amend a Decision. In the event the Complaint cannot be resolved through the Secretary Complaint process/this Policy, the Complaint may be submitted to the Ontario Ombudsman.

The Decision will consist of information such as:

- Overview of Complaint
- Details of how the investigation was conducted.
- Summary of the facts
- Outline of the findings
- Identification of next steps
- Suggestions of appropriate resolution along with the rationale supporting the proposed resolution

## **8. APPEAL**

There is no appeal process beyond what is defined in the “Decision section of this Policy” as shown above.

## **9. MONITORING**

### **9.1 Administration**

The Formal Complaint must be tracked from its initial receipt to its resolution. The Secretary or designate manages this process.

The Secretary or designate will keep a centralized, up-to-date Board Complaint Tracking log of all Complaints by tracking number.

An annual report of Complaints will be presented to the Board for review and consideration in June of each year.

### **9.2 Existing Complaint**

When action is taken on an existing Formal Complaint by telephone or voicemail, a record of this action will be saved on the Board Complaint Tracking Form. All correspondence between the Secretary or Designated Investigator and the Complainant must be documented.

## **10.PRIVACY**

Complaints will be dealt with in a confidential manner in accordance with applicable privacy legislation including the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA) and the Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA) (“Privacy Legislation”). Any information collected for the purposes of this policy will be collected, used, and disclosed only in accordance with Privacy Legislation or any other legislative requirements.

All documents relating to any Complaint shall be kept secure and in accordance with applicable legislation and the Board’s Records Retention Schedule.

The Municipal Dog Pound Board is committed to the professional development of all Staff and is committed to supporting Staff in the performance and execution of their duties with competence and professionalism. As a result, any responsive actions to a Complaint which involves taking any action to improve a Staff member's performance, will respect the employer/employee relationship and as such will not be identified to the public or to the Complainant.

## **11.RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

Upon delivery of a Decision, the Complaint will be deemed resolved / closed and all physical and electronic documents pertaining to the Complaint will be maintained by the Secretary according to the Board's Records Retention Schedule. No copies of privileged information will be kept by any other person or Department.

## **12.RESPONSIBILITY**

All Staff should have a clear understanding of how Complaints are handled by the Board.

A copy of this Policy will be provided to all Staff and members of the Board, training will be conducted if necessary.

The Board promotes the principles of accessibility through the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Please refer to the Board's Accessibility Policy for more information.

The Board may make amendments to update the Complaint Policy and Forms as required.

## **13.Appendices**

Appendix A – Complaint Form (public use)

Appendix B – Complaint Tracking Form (internal use)

## APPENDIX "A" COMPLAINT FORM

### HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

The Municipal Dog Pound Board has procedures for receiving and handling complaints from individuals who are dissatisfied with service, action, or lack of action by the Board or Staff member. We recommend first speak directly with the service area where you have an issue, in person or by telephone. Most complaints are received verbally and can be resolved promptly by the person in charge of the service.

If you are not satisfied with how your verbal complaint is handled you can submit a written complaint by completing this form, which is available on our website

[www.municipaldogpound.com](http://www.municipaldogpound.com)

#### \*Mandatory Field

#### Complainant Contact Details

First name *	Last name *
Email Address (considered the most prompt way we can communicate with you)	
Mailing Address *	Phone Number *
Note: If only a mailing address is provided our timelines may be extended	Note: We only call if we require clarification.

#### Complaint Type

- |                                                        |                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Access of Services            | <input type="checkbox"/> Programs               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facilities                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Staff Conduct          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outcome of Existing Complaint | <input type="checkbox"/> Timeliness of Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Processes or Procedures       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                  |

#### Summary of Complaint

Please record information on what happened, who was involved, dates, and times. Be as detailed as possible. If there is not enough space to describe the complaint, attach extra paper.

Details *
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Service area / location of problem *
Staff persons involved (if known and applicable)
List of enclosures (include copies of any documentation in support of the complaint)

### Resolve

How do you suggest the complaint be resolved?
-----------------------------------------------

### Sign Off

Complainant's signature *
Date complaint submitted (mm/dd/yyyy) *

### Timeline

The Secretary or designate will contact you to acknowledge this complaint within 5 business days after receiving this completed form. Further inquiries, investigation and resolution is expected within 30 days of receipt of this complaint. If this is not possible, you will be contacted and given a reason why this timeline is being adjusted.

### Notice of Collection

The personal information you choose to provide on this form is collected under the authority of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA). The information you provide will be used to investigate the complaint and may be used for contact purposes but is otherwise considered confidential. Questions about this collection can be directed to the Secretary, c/o 1379 Monck Road, Bancroft, ON K0L 1C0, 613-334-0120 (leave a message), [brenda.vader@sympatico.ca](mailto:brenda.vader@sympatico.ca)

### For Internal Use Only

Date Complaint Received: (mm/dd/yyyy)	Receiver Initials:	Tracking Number:
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**APPENDIX “B” COMPLAINT TRACKING FORM**

Tracking Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Complainant’s Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Designated Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_

**Complaint Stage 1 – Acknowledgement**

Notification of Receipt of Complaint by Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_

**Complaint Stage 2 – Assessment**

The complaint may be terminated at this point if a resolution is mutually determined if it is a duplicate or if it is not a complaint.

- Is the complaint misclassified? (Is it actually feedback / compliment or a service request, etc.?)
- Is the complaint a duplicate?
- Is more detailed information required from the complainant? If yes, check the box and notify complainant.

- Date of notification for additional information: (dd/mm/yyyy): \_\_\_\_\_

- Additional information received:

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- Can the complaint be resolved informally?

- Date of informal resolution: (dd/mm/yyyy): \_\_\_\_\_

- How it was informally resolved:

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### **Complaint Stage 3 – Investigation**

Investigation Notes:

### **Complaint Stage 4 – Resolution**

A resolution has been pursued and communication of the decision is provided to the Complainant in writing.

#### **Decision to Include:**

- |                                                       |                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overview of Complaint        | <input type="checkbox"/> Details of How Investigation was conducted                                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Summary of the Facts         | <input type="checkbox"/> Outline of the Findings                                                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Identification of Next Steps | <input type="checkbox"/> Suggestions of Appropriate Resolution and Rationale Supporting the Proposed Resolution |

Date of Decision to Complainant (dd/mm/yyyy): \_\_\_\_\_

### **Complaint Stage 5 – Records Management**

- Have all physical and electronic records been transferred to the Secretary?