

## APPROVAL REPORT

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### Decorative Lighting Rate Bylaw Change

#### ISSUE

This report provides an overview of the service level for the City of Saskatoon's decorative lighting program, including information about the implications of shutting off decorative lighting during the middle of the night.

#### RECOMMENDATION

That the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services recommend to refer an allocation of Reserve for Capital Expenditure funding of \$200,000 for Decorative Lighting Replacement to the Governance and Priorities Committee dealing with budget options for the 2020/2021 Business Plan and Budget.

#### BACKGROUND

The Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services, at its meeting on January 7, 2019, considered the Proposed Decorative Lighting Rate Bylaw Change report. The report recommended amendments to Bylaw No. 2685, The Electric Light and Power Bylaw (Bylaw) to remove provisions regarding the duration of seasonal decorations. Committee resolved in part:

“That the Administration report back by June 2019 on a strategy for winter lighting through consultation with the Business Improvement Districts.”

Further, City Council, at its meeting on January 28, 2019 amended the Bylaw to remove the provision regarding the duration of seasonal decorations and resolved:

“That the Administration report back with a recommendation for setting a time to shut off decorative lighting during the middle of the night, to be considered alongside the Winter Cities decorative lighting policy.”

#### Lighting Related Achievements To Date

To date, lighting related activities have been funded through capital projects such as the Winter City Capital project, including:

- a) A public presentation and workshop led by DeSchutter Studios held in April 2018. These were funded by the Winter City Capital project in partnership with the BIDs and other community organizations.
- b) In the summer of 2018, a follow up session with the same stakeholders was held to discuss next steps. Next steps included focusing on temporary lighting installations, however, no funding has been allocated to this at this time.

In addition to these Winter City initiatives, other lighting related work has been or is being pursued by the Administration including:

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- a) A lighting analysis of River Landing completed in December 2018. The analysis was funded by the River Landing Operating Budget.
- b) The Green Strategy, which is currently under development, has identified lighting as an emerging priority. No funding has been allocated at this time to pursue this work.

Also, Meewasin is in the early stages of developing a lighting policy and will be working in tandem with the Green Strategy team.

It is important to note that, to date, there is no direction or funding allocation to continue the initial exploration (outlined above) of a possible seasonal or winter lighting strategy.

### **CURRENT STATUS**

#### Duration of Decorative Lighting Operation

The decorative lighting circuit will be connected directly to the street lighting system, allowing the decorations to light up at the same time as the street lights. Dusk-to-dawn lighting will eliminate the need for the installation of special timers.

If the decision is made to turn off the lights in the middle of the night for a period of time, timers will be needed again. The cost associated with the timers is relatively small, but will require maintenance of the timers, increase the number of electrical circuits used, and take away operating money available for purchasing replacement decorations.

In consultation with the BIDs, as well as through an informal survey of other Canadian municipalities and the Winter City Institute, the Administration has concluded that the current best practice in Canada is to allow dusk-to-dawn lighting without turning the lights off in the middle of the night. It was also advised that there would be no anticipated dark-sky benefit to turning decorations off in the middle of the night as decorative lighting is typically placed in already highly illuminated areas. Dusk-to-dawn lighting was also confirmed as the preference of the Downtown BID, Broadway BID and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street BID, see Appendix 1.

#### Current Winter Lighting Program

The City's current winter lighting program is made up of approximately 306 illuminated seasonal and 116 non-illuminated decorations that are deployed on light poles over the holiday season. The program is currently managed by SL&P with assistance from Urban Design in selecting new decorations.

In a recent conditions assessment, SL&P found that 182 of the current stock of decorations were in very poor condition (see Appendix 2). Some of the decorations could not be installed in the 2018/2019 season. The BIDs have identified that the current condition of many of the decorations is not acceptable and that they would like to see an expanded and diversified winter lighting program.

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A proposed Service Level document describing the current service level and the financial implications of a change in the Service Level is provided for the current pole-mounted decorations in Appendix 3.

### Expanded Decorative Lighting Program

The Downtown, Broadway and Riversdale BIDs have identified expanded decorative lighting as a high priority for their organizations, including the desire to move beyond the pole mounted seasonal light installations (see Appendix 1). In addition, it is expected that the Winter City Strategy, which is currently under development, will include lighting as a future action item.

Administration currently does not have the funding or specialized resources available to undertake an expansion of the decorative lighting program beyond its current form. However, in consideration of the current state of the existing decorations, a portion of the funding from the Winter City capital project is being considered for one time use to accelerate the decorative lighting replacement schedule. This would not address the long-term issue of inadequate replacement funding.

## **DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**

### Policy Implications

There are no policy implications at this time. If an expanded Decorative Lighting or Winter Lighting Policy is desired, further direction and funding would be required.

### Financial Implications

Turning lights off in the middle of the night would necessitate the continued maintenance of the lighting timers, but would reduce the increased electrical consumption. It is estimated that turning the lights off in the middle of the night would reduce the electrical costs by \$1,300 per season, but maintaining the timer circuits would cost approximately \$1,700 per season. This results in a net cost increase of approximately \$400 per season.

Based on the current funding for this operating program, it will take 6 years to replace the existing decorations that are in either poor or very poor condition. In order to accelerate this replacement schedule, additional capital funding from the Reserve for Capital Expenditures would be needed in the amount of \$200,000. This could either be accomplished over a period of one year or multiple years.

Expansion of the City's decorative lighting program beyond the current state would require additional funding.

### Environmental Implications

Reducing the hours of lighting would reduce the increase in energy consumption associated with lighting. If decorative lights were turned off from 11:00 p.m. to sunrise, it could reduce the energy consumption by half compared with simple dusk-to-dawn operation. For City-owned decorative lighting, this could reduce energy consumption by as much as 20 MWh compared to if all lights are operating dusk-to-dawn all winter.

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This would reduce the possible increase in Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by 13 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e, the equivalent of removing 2.5 cars from the road each year.

The City's seasonal lighting decorations are currently installed in highly lit areas such as the BIDs and major roadways. The lumen levels of these decorative lights are insignificant in comparison with the surrounding ambient lighting and have no significant impact on light trespass levels. If decorative lighting is considered for sensitive areas in the future, this relative impact should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### **NEXT STEPS**

To maintain the status quo unless directed otherwise by City Council.

### **APPENDICES**

1. Letters of Support – Sutherland BID, Downtown BID, and Broadway BID
2. Decorative Lighting Replacement Schedule
3. Service Level Document for Seasonal Lighting

#### **Report Approval**

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