

## **Policy Statement**

1. The City recognizes that fair, consistent, and transparent by-law enforcement is essential to protecting public health and safety, preserving community standards, and enhancing quality of life. The City is committed to an enforcement approach that promotes voluntary compliance wherever possible and ensures that actions taken are proportionate, reasonable, and respectful of individual rights, while upholding the municipality's responsibility to the community.

## **Purpose**

2. This policy establishes the City's standard for the receipt, investigation and resolution of regulatory by-law complaints, while also outlining the circumstances under which proactive enforcement will be undertaken.

## **Scope**

3. This policy applies to enforcement of regulatory by-law complaints received by the City and proactive enforcement initiated by an officer.
4. This policy does not supersede any regulatory by-laws approved by City Council.

## **Definitions**

5. For the purposes of this policy,  
"City" means the City of Owen Sound and a reference to the City is a reference to the geographical area or to The Corporation of the City of Owen Sound as the context requires;  
"hotspot" means an area of the City identified as experiencing high crime and/or regulatory infraction intensity and declared a 'hotspot' by resolution of Council;  
"officer" means a By-law Enforcement Officer of the City; and  
"priority list" means a structured ranking system used to assess and respond to complaints based on their urgency, severity, potential risk to public health or safety, and impact on the community.

## **Policy**

### **Compliance and enforcement**

6. Officers shall foster compliance with City regulatory by-laws through education, awareness, promotion, advice and enforcement as deemed appropriate by the officer.
7. Enforcement will be undertaken by way of a warning, fee, order, certificate of offence, or laying an information under oath before a justice as deemed appropriate by the officer.

### **Support for other agencies**

8. Officers will provide support to other enforcement agencies investigating violations under:
  - a. federal and provincial legislation; or
  - b. by-laws enacted by other jurisdictions, Grey County, or another body through City Council's delegated authority.

### **Complainant expectations**

9. Any person filing a by-law complaint may expect:
  - a. a prompt and thorough response to the complaint; and
  - b. that their identity and personal information will be kept confidential and used only for the purposes of communicating with City staff about the complaint.

### **Proactive enforcement**

10. All regulatory by-laws passed by City Council will be enforced by complaint except infractions:
  - a. observed by an officer where the officer deems it necessary to enforce;
  - b. observed as part of a patrol scheduled by the By-law Enforcement Division;
  - c. observed at hotspots within the City;
  - d. observed in the River District; or
  - e. under the City's Yard Maintenance By-law, where a valid complaint has previously been filed against a property within the same or preceding calendar year.
11. Proactive enforcement of by-law infractions will be completed:
  - a. subject to the availability of staffing;

- b. subsequent to any complaints received by the division; and
- c. subject to prioritization of concerns as determined by the priority list and the division supervisor.

### **Requests for information**

12. Requests for information will not be treated as complaints unless the officer deems that the matter may be an immediate threat to health or safety.

### **No response**

13. Unless an officer deems a complaint to be an immediate threat to health or safety, officers will not respond to complaints that:
- a. are hypothetical, or have yet to occur;
  - b. are overly general, i.e. complaint about all neighbourhood properties;
  - c. are anonymous;
  - d. are publicly posted or published but not sent directly to the City, including an opinion or editorial, website or posting on social media;
  - e. lack sufficient detail to begin an investigation or a way of contacting the complainant for additional information; or
  - f. involve a private dispute where there is no violation of a City by-law.

### **Ownership in question**

14. Where the subject of an alleged by-law violation is lands, structures or objects for which ownership cannot be determined, an officer may:
- a. assign responsibility for resolving the violation to the property owners abutting the subject of the violation; or
  - b. decline to respond to the complaint.

### **Policy review**

15. The City Clerk will review this policy:
- a. every five (5) years to ensure effectiveness and compliance with current business processes; or
  - a. sooner, if required, based on legislative changes.
16. The City Clerk is authorized to make such administrative changes to this policy as appropriate to keep the policy current. Any revision to the policy's intent must be presented to Council for consideration.

# Related Information and Resources

## Internal

- 17. [Yard Maintenance By-law](#)
- 18. [By-law Enforcement Priority List](#)

## External

- 19. n/a

## Appendices

- 20. n/a

## Revision History

Authority	Date	Approval	Description of Amendment
Council	2025-09-08	By-law No. 2025-108	New policy; formerly CrS-BL6
Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.	Choose an item.	
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