

AGENDA ITEM NO: 7.3.

MEETING DATE: September 6, 2022

**STAFF REPORT – COVER SHEET**

SUBJECT: Vedder River – Safety Regulations for Watercraft DATE: September 1, 2022

DEPARTMENT: Operations PREPARED BY: Glen MacPherson

**1. SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

Every year the City receives complaints about speeding jet boats and jet skis travelling along the Vedder River compromising public safety. Council have asked staff to investigate what action could be taken to restrict the speed of, or to ban all together, motorized watercraft on the Vedder River.

Transport Canada is the governing body which regulates boating safety and speed on all Canadian waterways. It is possible, pursuant to the Vessel Operation Restriction Regulations (VORR's) for a local government to apply to restrict the speed of motorized watercraft on the Vedder River. However, the process to even get to the stage where an application is ready to be submitted is extremely long and arduous and Transport Canada (TC) estimate 4 to 5 years for a VORR application to go through due process.

In 2021 staff initiated a public consultation process to gauge support or opposition to a proposed 5 kmh speed restriction along the Vedder River from the Keith Wilson Road Bridge upstream to the Vedder Bridge. Initial feedback received showed support from 99% of respondents for the City to implement a solution / solutions to mitigate the safety threat created by speeding watercraft which could be by way of a federal speed restriction or some other, to be determined, alternative solution. Prior to applying under the VORR regulations for a speed restriction it is important to note that the City is required to "exhaust" all other alternative solutions with a speed restriction being considered by TC as the very last resort to protect public safety.

TC have informed the City that there are several existing regulatory laws in place to prohibit unsafe boating practices which can be enforced by DFO or other designated enforcement officers. These regulations specifically include *Section 5.1007 of the Small Vessel Regulations* and *Section 15 of the Vessel Operation Restriction Regulations*. The City should work with DFO on these possible enforcement options and concurrently the City should also develop a comprehensive public education strategy to "get the message out" to river users that public safety on the river is paramount and that regulations will be enforced. One major component of such a public education strategy would be a "public advisory" signage campaign at boat launch points as well as at other strategic points along the river. The key to success of such a campaign is to garner public support and involvement. This could be in the form of establishing a public reporting line where anyone who witnesses unsafe activities along the river can report details of those to the enforcing authority.

Staff have had several meetings with TC, specifically the Office of Boating Safety, to discuss how the aforementioned regulations could be used to improve boating safety along the Vedder River, enforcement options / partners and public education strategies. Staff are recommending that these meetings with TC continue, that they involve DFO and with support and advice from TC a public education campaign be developed for implementation in early spring 2023 to run for a full boating season until the fall of 2023. Running the campaign for one full boating season will enable staff to monitor its effectiveness by hopefully seeing a reduction in the number of complaints received regarding speeding watercraft.

**2. RECOMMENDATION:**

That Council Direct staff to work with Transport Canada, Office of Boating Safety and DFO to develop and implement solutions to improve boat and public safety along the Vedder River including a public education campaign to run through the 2023 boating season.

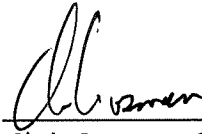


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Glen MacPherson, Director of Operations

**3. CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S  
RECOMMENDATION/COMMENTS:**

Supports recommendation.



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Chris Crosman, CAO