

From: "Johnston, Sadhu" <Sadhu.Johnston@vancouver.ca>

To: "Direct to Mayor and Council - DL" <CCDTMACDL@vancouver.ca>

Date: 2/16/2016 8:52:59 AM

Subject: Request to staff RTS 11292 - Rat Complaints Update

Attachments: [Memo to Mayor and Council - RTS #11292 - Rat Complaints Update.pdf](#)

Dear Mayor and Council,

Please see attached Memo from Jerry Dobrovolny, GM - Engineering Services with an update on Rat Complaints.

Over the past several months City staff have undertaken a review of 2014 311 resident complaints regarding rats throughout the City. The purpose of the review was to:

- investigate if rat complaints are related to the green bin program; and
- identify clusters of complaints and determine what might be contributing to the rat complaints.

Ten areas or clusters were identified for further field investigation and a pest control contractor was hired to look at the local conditions that may be leading to rat problems.

The key conclusions of the pest control contractor were:

- Green Bins were not a contributing factor to rat problems and may in fact be reducing problems as the bins are closed, were generally in good order and kept in a tidy condition; and
- Local property conditions were the main contributor to rat issues.

The majority of 311 calls regarding rat problems are for dead animal pickup and issues related to private property, mainly messy overgrown yards, reflecting unmaintained property. These calls are dealt with by Property Use inspectors.

Another contributor to rat issues in the past has been building demolitions not addressing rats within the building prior to demolition. Development Services is taking steps to manage this through conditions on the demolition permit.

Best,
Sadhu Johnston
Acting City Manager

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ENGINEERING SERVICES
Jerry Dobrovolny, P.Eng.
City Engineer/General Manager

MEMORANDUM

February 12, 2016

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Sadhu Johnston, Acting City Manager
Paul Mochrie, Acting Deputy City Manager
Janice MacKenzie, City Clerk
Lynda Graves, Manager, Administration Services, City Manager's Office
Rena Kendall-Craden, Director, Communications
Mike Magee, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Kevin Quinlan, Deputy Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Braeden Caley, Director, Policy and Communications, Mayor's Office
Malcolm Bromley, General Manager, Parks and Recreation
Andrea Toma, Director, Licensing, Property Use Inspections & Animal Services
Sophie Dessureault, Integrated Pest Management Coordinator, Parks and Recreation
Patrick Ryan, Chief Building Official
Mike Collister, Manager Building Inspections and Enforcement
Debbie Heeps, Manager, Property Use Inspection
Albert Shames, Director, Waste Management and Resource Recovery
Taryn Scollard, Director, Streets
Ken Brown, Manager, Streets, Traffic & Electrical Branch
Ozzie Lepore, Superintendent Streets Maintenance
Scott Edwards, Manager, Streets Activities
Darcy Wilson, Director, Digital & Contact Centre Services
Richard Traer, 311 Contact Centre Manager

FROM: Jerry Dobrovolny, General Manager of Engineering Services

SUBJECT: Rat Complaints Update (RTS #11292)

Over the past several months City staff has undertaken a review of 3-1-1 resident complaints regarding rats throughout the City. The purpose of the review was to:

- Investigate if rat complaints are related to the green bin program; and
- Identify clusters of complaints and determine what might be contributing to the rat complaints.

City of Vancouver, Engineering Services
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A number of departments work together to deal with rat issues in the city. Details on the role of each department are provided in Appendix A.

In spring of 2015 the 3-1-1 Contact Centre reviewed their data on rat related calls for 2014. They identified locations of calls regarding rats, and looked at the types of calls received. Ten areas or clusters were identified for further field investigation to look at the local conditions that may be leading to rat problems (see attached map). The Provincial Integrated Pest Management inspectors advised that rats need food, water and nesting/harborage sites to survive.

In July and August 2015, a pest control contractor was retained to work with Street Operations and inspect a number of the sites within the 10 clusters. A total of 29 sites were visited to look for local conditions that may be contributing to rodent complaints.

The key conclusions of the pest control contractor were that:

- Green Bins for food scraps and yard trimmings were not a contributing factor to rat problems and if properly managed may in fact be reducing problems as in most cases the bins are closed, were generally in good order and kept in a tidy condition; and
- There are a number of local conditions that contribute to the rat problems:
 - In some lanes commercial waste containers (dumpsters) were noted to be open, overflowing and/or litter and waste was on the ground surrounding the containers;
 - Wood piles, building materials and mattresses piled on private property were observed and contribute to rodents settling in and building nests;
 - Poor exterior building maintenance leading to nesting opportunities;
 - Community gardens composting food scraps; and
 - Poorly maintained or managed backyard gardens or composters.

In 2015, there were approximately 830 cases reported to the 3-1-1 Contact Centre regarding rats, mice and rodents and approximately 840 cases in 2014. Cases include calls to 3-1-1 for both private property and public property including parks. Recently the media has quoted 84 complaints in 2014. This media number was generated prior to 3-1-1 preparing a detailed analysis of cases and is actually a subset of the total number of cases. Staff from 3-1-1 are currently reviewing and summarizing 2015 data and assessing calls from 2011, 2012 and 2013 for comparison.

The majority of calls regarding rat problems are for dead animal pickup and issues related to private property, mainly messy overgrown yards, reflecting unmaintained property. When calls are received relating to problems on private property the City's property use inspectors can issue an order to the property owner to clean up the location. If no action is taken by the property owner, the City can clean the property and charge the cost back to the owner.

A major contributor to rat issues in the past has been building demolitions not addressing rats within the building prior to demolition. Development Services is taking steps to manage this through conditions on the demolition permit.

Actions taken to date include:

- The City web site now has a specific section for “Getting help with rats and mice” <http://vancouver.ca/home-property-development/get-help-with-rats-and-mice.aspx>
 - If the sighting is on City or Park property, citizens are advised to call 311. If the sighting is on private property, the building owner/operator should be contacted and if they receive no action, citizens can call 311.
 - There is also a section with helpful information on “Managing rats and mice yourself” <http://vancouver.ca/home-property-development/manage-rats-and-mice-yourself.aspx>
- Sanitation Services is ramping up efforts to manage abandoned and illegally dumped waste and reduce the potential for it to become a nesting area for rats;
- Composting tips for community gardens advising them not to include food scraps are being prepared;
- The Clean Streets Team is taking a proactive approach with investigating and enforcing commercial container license requirements to minimize the risk of problems from overflowing commercial containers. We have made significant headway in the Downtown Eastside and Downtown core, though those two areas of the city continue to be challenging.
- Staff is reviewing internal business processes, roles and responsibilities to provide greater clarity and effectiveness for responding to rat complaints.
- Recently passed bylaw changes provide a more streamlined enforcement process for abandoned and illegally dumped waste. This coupled with increased efforts to remove abandoned waste as soon as possible, help to eliminate possible harborages and sources of food.

If you have any questions or concerns or need any more detail, please feel free to contact Albert Shames, Director of Waste Management and Resource Recovery at 604-873-7300.



Jerry W. Dobrovolny, P. Eng., MBA
General Manager of Engineering Services

Appendix A

A number of departments work together to deal with rat issues in the city:

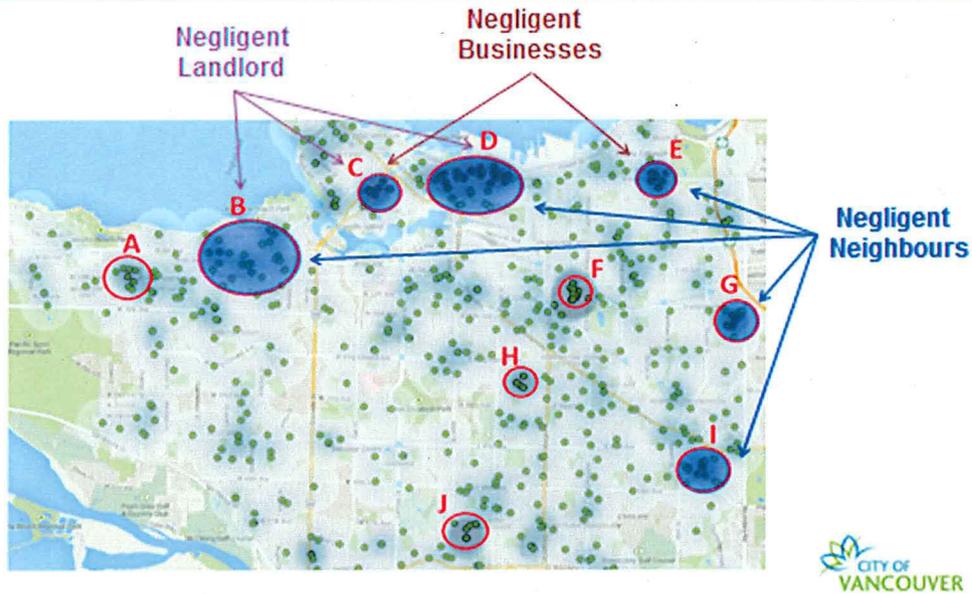
- Engineering Services Street Operations deals with rat issues in the public realm and Waste Management and Resource Recovery deals with issues associated with commercial waste containers on public property and the Green Bin program;
- Park Board deals with rat related concerns in parks;
- 3-1-1 Contact Centre receives and tracks calls; and
- Property Use and Development Services deal with rat issues on private property.

The role of each group is summarized below.

Summary of Department Roles

- Engineering Services, Streets, Traffic and Electrical Operations
 - Address complaints regarding rats in the public realm.
 - Actions typically involve cutting back vegetation and filling nesting holes with gravel.
- Engineering Services, Waste Management and Resource Recovery
 - Address issues in the public realm related to commercial containers, Green Bin and abandoned waste.
 - Actions typically involve inspection, requiring haulers and owners to secure and clean up, and clean up by city crews.
- Park Board
 - Address issues in parks and park facilities.
 - Actions typically involve investigation and use of a pest control contractor.
 - Staff awareness and education on minimizing food sources through operational practices.
- 3-1-1- Contact Centre
 - Receive calls on rat issues and forwards service request to respective departments.
 - Record and report on statistics.
- Property Use
 - Address issues on private property.
 - May involve building interior and yard areas.
 - Actions typically involve investigation and process of escalating enforcement as needed including requirements for owners to retain pest control management.
- Development Services
 - Address issues related to building demolition.
 - Action typically involves inspection and requiring contractor to retain pest management as needed.
 - Developing process to manage through demolition permits.

Map of all 2014 rodent-related cases and 10 clusters to be analyzed



Map of all 2014 rodent-related cases and 10 clusters to be analyzed

