



## THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF AMHERSTBURG

### OFFICE OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

*MISSION STATEMENT: Committed to delivering cost-effective and efficient services for the residents of the Town of Amherstburg with a view to improve and enhance their quality of life.*

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Author's Phone: 519 736-3664 ext. 2320	Date to Council: January 10, 2022
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To: Mayor and Members of Town Council

Subject: Rain Barrel Program

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#### 1. RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that:

1. A rain barrel pilot program **BE APPROVED**; and,
2. That \$6500 **BE ADDED** to the 2022 draft budget for the purchase of 100 rain barrels for resale under the Public Works budget centre, miscellaneous expense to be funded from taxation, offset by the proceeds from resale.

#### 2. BACKGROUND:

At the September 14, 2020 meeting, Council adopted the following motion:

Resolution # 20200914-267

"That Administration **BE DIRECTED** to look into the feasibility of a rain barrel program to offer residents at a discounted cost."

#### 3. DISCUSSION:

Like many municipalities, a number of extreme rainfall events have occurred in the Town over the past few decades that have resulted in extensive damage to some homes from basement flooding.

The Town has encouraged private property owners to take actions to address the risk of damage to their properties from sewer backups and other water perils. There has been

significant investment in sewer infrastructure renewals, voluntary downspout disconnection in parts of the Town, mandatory downspout disconnection in flood sensitive areas of Town, financial incentives to encourage homeowners to install backwater valves, sump pump overflows and to disconnect foundation drainage from the Town's sewer system, and a public outreach campaign. Amherstburg has consistently demonstrated a long-term commitment to assist property owners in mitigating their risk of damage from sewer backups due to extreme rainfall.

Introducing a pilot program for purchase and resale of rain barrels would add to the list of flood protection options, would provide an added measure to the Town's Flood Protection program and may further encourage the disconnection of downspouts.

What is a rain barrel? A rain barrel is a system used by a homeowner to collect and store rainwater from the roof of a home. The water harvested is soft, fresh water that can be used for a variety of purposes including lawn and garden watering, topping off pools, and washing cars. Water from home faucets is treated to a level allowing it to be safe to drink, while natural rain water has the pH level ideal for plant growth. Rain water harvesting helps to divert rain from storm drains, decrease the impact of runoff to streams, and minimize sewer overflows during heavy rainfalls.

Rain barrels also allow homeowners to use less water from the faucet, conserving both water and energy in the home as well as the energy needed for wastewater facilities to treat the water. Lawn and garden watering make up nearly 40% of domestic water usage during peak summer months. Rain barrels reduce the demand for clean water, helps homeowners reduce their water bills while conserving water and protecting the environment.

The risk that extreme rainfall events will overwhelm storm and wastewater systems is increased where downspouts discharge directly into sewers. A large volume of water can be collected from rooftops during an extreme rain event and if this water is directed into the storm or sanitary sewer system, sewers can quickly become overwhelmed, increasing the risk that water and wastewater will find its way into homes, or that untreated wastewater will pollute local surface water. The risk of damage to homes from basement flooding not only affects houses with connected downspouts, but can also affect neighbouring properties. The proper use of rainwater harvesting with rain barrels may help alleviate stress on the Town's sewer systems during these rain events.

Administration is recommending a pilot program where the Town would purchase 100 rain barrels and would resell them to residents. Rain barrels can be purchased by the Town at a reduced rate, when comparing to retail stores, due to the bulk purchases the Town would make. This reduced rate would be offered to the residents. The Amherstburg Environmental Advisory Committee is proposing the creation of a Town event for Earth Day. Rain Barrels could be available at this event for purchase as well as directly from the Infrastructure Services Department. Installation and maintenance would be the responsibility of the owner. The Town would limit the purchase to one per property initially, to ensure that many homeowners are given the opportunity to acquire a rain barrel. Manufacturer instructions on how to properly install a rain barrel and the benefits associated with its use would also be provided to the customer.

Administration would bring back a report to Council on the outcome of the pilot program and make any recommendations to continue the program depending on the success of the pilot program.

#### **4. RISK ANALYSIS:**

Rain barrels work by collecting and re-using rainwater for lawns and gardens, minimizing the amount of rainwater flowing into the storm drains, sewer systems and local waterways.

Encouraging the purchase and use of rain barrels by property owners could enhance the Town's overall flooding reduction strategies to the benefit of the specific participating property owners and the Town as a whole in relation to potential flooding events. In addition, it would allow an opportunity for the property owners to cut back on water consumption, save money and protect local lakes and rivers.

If the Town introduces a rain barrel resale program, there is risk that the rain barrels will not sell and the Town will not recover the cost of the barrels.

#### **5. FINANCIAL MATTERS:**

Prices for rain barrels at local retail locations vary from \$90 to \$160 each plus taxes.

In order to offer customers reduced pricing, Administration has obtained costing from two different rain barrel suppliers based on bulk purchases.

	Cost per barrel (100 barrel min) excluding tax	Total cost (excluding applicable taxes)
EnviroWorld	\$62.90	\$6,290
Orbis Canada	\$67.85	\$6,785

If Council directs that the Town introduce a rain barrel resale program, the direct cost to procure the barrels should be included in the 2022 Budget, with an estimated recovery through resale proceeds. Then the barrels could be procured and sold in the spring, similar to other local programs.

#### **6. CONSULTATIONS:**

None

#### **7. CONCLUSION:**

Rain barrels are an added tool that could help both the Town and the resident mitigate the impacts of stormwater on private properties and on the Town's infrastructure.

This report is provided in response to Council's request for information and provides an option for Council's consideration.



Antonietta Giofu  
Director of Infrastructure Services

### Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Rain Barrel Program2.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Jan 5, 2022

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Tiffany Hong



Tony Haddad



Valerie Critchley