

STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

From: Joanna Winter, Manager of Legislative Services
 Meeting Date: November 27, 2017
 File No: 3900-20
 RE: **CONSULTATION RESULTS – KEEPING OF BACKYARD HENS**

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the Committee determine whether it wishes to recommend that Council introduce an amendment to Animal and Poultry Bylaw 1994, No. 1136 that would permit the raising of hens in backyards in appropriate residential zones in Ladysmith.

2. If the Committee wishes to pursue an amendment to Bylaw 1136 to permit the keeping of hens in back yards, that it consider whether it wishes to apply the following or any other conditions:
 - a) Allow the keeping of hens in backyards of single family residentially zoned properties with a minimum lot size of 668 m² (7200 ft²)
 - b) Limit the number of hens to four on each property and prohibit roosters
 - c) Require chicken coops to be licensed
 - d) Establish requirements for size, siting enclosure and cover of coops and runs
 - e) Require owners to take an appropriate course in the care and raising of hens
 - f) Prohibit slaughtering of hens on residential properties
 - g) Prohibit disposal of carcasses in residential waste

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this staff report is to provide Council with the results of a community consultation held to determine community sentiment regarding the possibility of keeping backyard hens in Ladysmith.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION

Resolution	Meeting Date	Resolution Details
CS 2017-255	Aug-21-2017	That Council direct staff to: 1. Conduct a public consultation with Town residents on the desirability and possible content of an amendment to the “Animal and Poultry Bylaw 1994, No. 1136” to allow the keeping of hens on residentially zoned properties in the Town of Ladysmith.



INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND:

In response to public enquiries about the keeping of hens in backyards in Ladysmith, Council directed staff to conduct a public consultation process to determine public sentiment on the matter.

The engagement process consisted of:

- A September 12 news release to announce launch of the public consultation
- Social media posts for 6 weeks to encourage people to take the survey electronically or via hardcopy, join the discussion in person or online via PlaceSpeak, and/or email the Town with comments and suggestions
- A survey, both online and hard copy available in various outlets
- A Public Open House held September 20, 2017 with a representative from City of Nanaimo to speak to that community's experience, as well as a mother and daughter who keep hens in North Cowichan
- A PlaceSpeak topic open for input and comment, including a link to the survey, throughout September, October and early November
- A write-up in the fall Utility Bill newsletter encouraging residents to complete a survey and/or visit the PlaceSpeak page

Summary of Public Input

Over 562 points of contact from Ladysmith residents

- 26 people attended the open house on September 20
- 8 emails were sent regarding backyard hens
 - o 1 in favour
 - o 7 not in favour
- 129 full surveys completed, comprised of 10 questions. Results included:
 - o 48 hard copies turned in,
 - 26 from the open house
 - 22 turned in to City Hall, and
 - o 81 online via Place Speak
 - o Interest in keeping backyard hens?
 - 62 interested
 - 46 not interested
 - 19 not sure
 - o In favour of a bylaw amendment to allow backyard hen?
 - 82 in favour
 - 42 not in favour
 - 4 not sure

- 82 PlaceSpeak one question polls were completed (Should the existing Bylaw be amended?)
 - o 51 Yes
 - o 31 No
- 173 reactions were counted on the Town of Ladysmith Facebook page including:
 - o 114 likes
 - o 9 shares
 - o 50 comments
 - 13 in favour
 - 30 general comments
 - 7 not in favour
- 44 reactions on Twitter were counted including:
 - o 27 likes/loves
 - o 17 retweets
 - o 3 comments (all in favour)
- It was noted that there was discussion about the topic on other Ladysmith-related Facebook groups

General comments in favour of backyard hens – In order of popularity, according to the survey

- Food security
- Environmental sustainability
- Educational opportunities
- Community building
- Companionship
- Other:
 - o Care and keeping for youth responsibility
 - o Good for 4H
 - o Youth business opportunities
 - o Depends on lot size. Different options should be available for 2 acres
 - o Interest in rescue chickens
 - o Eggs are only during laying season
 - o Save money - Cheaper than buying eggs
 - o Only if property is large enough
 - o How would butchering fit in?
 - o Would support, but perhaps off site
 - o Strong belief in bringing food source close to home.
 - o Chickens/rabbits together interesting idea
 - o Pest Control in Gardens (bugs)
 - o Other nearby municipalities have them
 - o Should have a licence to get them – but not too expensive, so all can afford who want chickens

- o Evidence of residents already having them – need to make it legal
- o Dogs & cats create more problems than chickens

General comments not in favour- in order of concern

- Rodents/Pests - rats
- Proper care and treatment of chickens
- Smell
- Attracting wildlife – eg. raccoons, cougars, bears, etc
- Unsightly chicken coops
- Noise
- Increase in bylaw enforcement calls
- Public health concerns – eg. avian flu, psittacosis (parrot fever)
- Other:
 - o Need to ensure that there are strict bylaws in place for this
 - o Not enough bylaw enforcement in Town to deal with this
 - o Cruel to keep these animals in such small environments, & cages/coops
 - o Too few responsible owners
 - o Concern that residents won't clean up in a timely matter
 - o No roosters – clarification needed as to what exactly is proposed to be permitted
 - o Chicken poop
 - o Nowhere to "dispose" of carcasses
 - o Shouldn't be permitted in residential areas, especially subdivisions
 - o Ladysmith stands alone against marijuana "outlets", so they can stand against this ridiculous idea, too
 - o Will lead to wanting other farm animals – eg. Goats

Many of the concerns raised can be addressed by including appropriate regulations within a bylaw with respect to size of coop, appropriate protection from predators, limiting the size of the flock, prohibiting roosters and other matters outlined in the recommendation above.

A potential concern is the burden this initiative could place on Bylaw Enforcement staff, depending on the number of residents choosing to raise hens. It is believed that a requirement for residents to take a course on the care and keeping of hens before being licensed will help to reduce bylaw complaints.

ALTERNATIVES:

Council can choose to proceed with introducing a bylaw amendment to permit keeping hens in backyards, or can choose not to permit the practice at this time.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

N/A

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

The draft bylaw will be reviewed by legal counsel to ensure it is enforceable and appropriate, should Council choose to introduce one.

CITIZEN/PUBLIC RELATIONS IMPLICATIONS:

As can be seen from the results of the public consultation, there are proponents and opponents of this issue. It is anticipated that public reaction will be mixed, although the recommendations as to regulating, licensing and other matters are recommended in order to address the concerns raised by opponents while encouraging responsible keeping of hens.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL INVOLVEMENT/IMPLICATIONS:

Should the Committee proceed with the bylaw amendment, amendments to the Zoning Bylaw will also be required. Once staff have direction with respect to Council's preferences, further information about consequential bylaw amendments will be provided for consideration. In addition to this work by Development Services staff, Legislative Services staff will implement a public education campaign; Financial Services staff will be involved in issuing licences, and Bylaw Enforcement will be responsible for addressing complaints.

ALIGNMENT WITH SUSTAINABILITY VISIONING REPORT:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Complete Community Land Use | <input type="checkbox"/> Low Impact Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Green Buildings | <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-Use Landscapes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Innovative Infrastructure | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Food Systems |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Healthy Community | <input type="checkbox"/> Local, Diverse Economy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable | |

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment & Tax Diversity | <input type="checkbox"/> Natural & Built Infrastructure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watershed Protection & Water Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Partnerships |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communications & Engagement | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable |

SUMMARY:

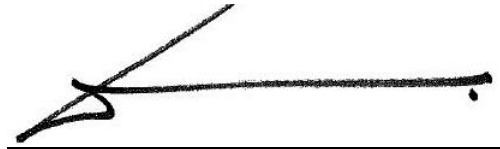
Staff conducted a public consultation process in September and October to determine the level of public support for the possibility of a bylaw amendment to allow raising hens on residentially zoned properties in Ladysmith. The results are presented for the Committee's consideration and discussion.



Joanna Winter, Manager of Legislative Services

November 21, 2017

I concur with the recommendation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of connected strokes that form a stylized, somewhat abstract shape.

Guillermo Ferrero, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS: