

June 28, 2020

Re: Letter of Support: Change the bylaw to allow for backyard hens

Dear Planning Committee,

I am writing to ask that you change the bylaw to allow for backyard hens. My recommendation would be to allow for 4 hens and no roosters.

I have attached the presentation that I made to council in 2018. All the points are still valid and even more so since the Covid-19 crisis.

I'd like to summarize the main reasons for my support and recap the debate that was had in council:

- **Issue: Eggs**

On average, one hen lays one egg per day. Through the Covid-19 crisis, many stores were sold out of eggs.

Argument: Councilor Brenda Johnson stated that instead of having hens, citizens should support local farmers.

My point: The handful of citizens that would have hens would likely be nature and animal lovers like me. Of course we'd still support local farmers since eggs produced would be for personal consumption and could not be sold.

- **Issue: Hens eat ticks**

The tick population in Hamilton is exploding. Ticks cause Lyme Disease which means higher healthcare costs.

Argument: Councilor Sam Merulla stated that ticks only live in tall grass and fields.

My point: I live in the residential neighbourhood of Mount Hope and I maintain the lawn. There is no tall grass in my backyard. In the past 2 years, we have come across numerous ticks. 2 were found on my daughter after playing in the backyard and my husband had one land on his arm while sitting on the deck. My dog also picked up 3 ticks in his ear after a neighbourhood walk on the sidewalks.

- **Issue: Hens keep food and yard waste out of landfills**

A single chicken can bio-recycle about seven pounds of food residuals in a month. When you feed your chickens kitchen scraps, they poop out a nitrogen-rich fertilizer which you compost with yard waste, creating invaluable organic soil.

Argument: Councillor Terry Whitehead asked how people would know what to feed them.

My point: Like any responsible pet owner, you would research how to take care of and feed an animal before you get it. Dog owners were first time dog owners at one point, and they learned.

- **Issue: Councillors were concerned about complaints**

Prior to approaching council in 2018, I did my research. All of Hamilton's surrounding municipalities allow for backyard hens and they have had great success. These municipalities include Toronto, Guelph, Caledon, Brampton, Kingston, Niagara Falls and Newmarket.

I contacted the bylaw department of each of these municipalities and asked about their backyard hen experience. I learned that the complaints were minimal and usually related to chickens running at large.

Argument: Councilor Terry Whitehead stated that if they allowed hens, citizens would next want horses and donkeys in their residential backyards.

My point: None of the above-mentioned municipalities have had citizens asking for horses and donkeys in their residential backyards as a result of allowing for backyard hens.

- **Issue: Councillors were concerned about hens attracting rodents**

As part of my research of other municipalities, this was a question that I asked. None of the bylaw departments had issues with backyard hens attracting rodents.

Like any responsible pet owner, you research how to properly take care of your animals. This would include securing their food and protecting them from the elements, including predators.

Dogs and cats can also attract rodents with their food and they are not banned.

Thank you for considering my letter of support for backyard hens.

Yours truly,

Christina Sousa
Mount Hope resident