



City of Hamilton

Report for Information

To: Chair and Members
Planning Committee

Date: March 24, 2026

Report No: PED26056

Subject/Title: Feasibility of Permitting Chickens and Roosters within the Settlement Area (S1) Zone in Zoning By-law No. 05-200

Ward(s) Affected: City Wide

Recommendations

- a) That Report PED26056, respecting the Feasibility of Permitting Chickens and Roosters within the Settlement Area (S1) Zone in Zoning By-law No. 05-200, **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- Requests from residents and community stakeholders have prompted discussion regarding whether Hamilton's rural areas are suitable for limited chicken keeping, outside of agricultural operations.
- At the April 8, 2025, Planning Committee meeting, a motion was brought forward directing staff to explore the feasibility of permitting chickens and roosters as

permitted Agricultural uses within the Settlement Residential (S1) Zone in Zoning By-law No. 05-200. The Settlement Residential (S1) Zone is considered a Rural Zone within Zoning By-law No. 05-200.

- Although Agriculture is a permitted use within the Settlement Residential (S1) Zone, the Zoning By-law limits Agricultural uses to the Growing of crops, Apiaries, Agro-forestry, and Maple syrup production. The keeping of livestock, including chickens and roosters, is not permitted.
- Consultation has taken place between staff in the Licensing and By-law Services Division (Animal Services and Municipal By-law Enforcement), Planning Division (Zoning By-law Reform), and Public Health to determine if the keeping of chickens and roosters is feasible within the Settlement Residential (S1) Zone and if an amendment to
- Zoning By-law No. 05-200 to permit this use would be appropriate.

Financial Considerations

There **are** financial implications associated with the recommendations contained in Report PED26056.

Background

At the April 8, 2025, Planning Committee meeting, a motion was brought forward that Animal Services, Municipal Law Enforcement, and Planning staff be directed to explore the feasibility of permitting chickens and roosters as permitted Agricultural uses within the Settlement Residential (S1) Zone.

The City of Hamilton currently regulates the keeping of animals through both the Zoning By-Law and the Responsible Animal Ownership By-law. Within the Zoning By-law, agricultural uses are permitted in certain Rural Zones; however, the keeping of livestock, including chickens or roosters, on rural residential or non-farm properties may be restricted depending on the zoning of the property. The Responsible Animal

Ownership By-Law is aligned with the Zoning By-Law and permits the keeping of livestock, such as chickens or roosters based on the zoning of the property.

Across Ontario, municipalities have taken varying approaches to permitting backyard or rural chickens, often distinguishing between urban, suburban, and rural contexts. Requests from residents and community stakeholders have prompted discussion regarding whether Hamilton's rural areas are suitable for limited chicken keeping, outside of full-scale agricultural operations.

Analysis

Consultation between staff in Public Health, Planning Division (Zoning By-law Reform), and Licensing and By-law Services (Animal Services) Division staff took place to assess the feasibility of permitting chickens and roosters within the Settlement Residential (S1) Zone. Staff took into consideration performance standards and regulatory tools such as:

- Limiting chickens to specific rural or agricultural zones;
- Establishing a maximum number of hens per property;
- Prohibiting roosters;
- Minimum lot size requirements;
- Setbacks for coops from property lines and dwellings;
- Standards for coop construction, sanitation, and waste management; and,
- Registration or Licensing requirements.

Rural Settlement Areas and the Settlement Residential (S1) Zone

The Settlement Residential (S1) Zone in Zoning By-law No. 05-200 applies exclusively within Rural Settlement Areas of the Rural Hamilton Official Plan (RHOP). Rural Settlement Areas are intended to support non-farm, rural-oriented development, with a limited range of small-scale, community-supportive uses permitted that serve the immediate community and surrounding rural area. The minimum lot area requirement of 0.4 hectares reflects the need to accommodate private servicing and results in larger lot sizes and greater separation between uses than found in the urban area.

The S1 Zone permits Single Detached Dwellings, Residential Care Facilities, and Agriculture. Agricultural uses are limited to the Growing of crops, Apiaries, Agro-forestry, and Maple syrup production. More intensive agricultural uses are not permitted, including the keeping of livestock which encompasses chickens and roosters, which are directed to the Agriculture (A1) and Rural (A2) Zones.

A review of other municipalities in Ontario indicates there are varying considerations and approaches to permitting chickens in rural settlements. Establishing performance standards through zoning regulations to manage scale, intensity of use, and land use compatibility, is but one consideration, alongside public health, animal welfare, sanitation, and nuisance issues.

Concerns and Challenges with Permitting Chickens in Rural Settlement Areas

Several concerns were raised during the consultation between City staff. These include:

1. Public Health and Biosecurity

Improper care or lack of biosecurity may increase the risk of disease transmission (e.g., avian influenza), potentially affecting both human health and nearby commercial poultry operations.

2. Animal Welfare

Without appropriate standards, there is a risk that chickens may be kept in inadequate conditions, leading to welfare concerns. Enforcement on minimum care standards may place additional demands on municipal resources.

3. Nuisance Impacts

Even in rural areas, chickens may generate noise, odours, pests (e.g. rodents) and waste management issues. These impacts could result in neighbour complaints, particularly in rural residential clusters.

4. Enforcement and Compliance

Allowing chickens would require clear standards and enforcement mechanisms. Monitoring compliance related to flock size, housing, setbacks, and waste disposal may increase demand on existing resources through both, administrative responsibilities, and enforcement.

5. Precedent for Urban Expansion

Permitting chickens in rural areas may generate pressure to allow similar uses in urban or suburban areas, potentially complicating future zoning and policy decisions.

Conclusion

Staff recommend that the keeping of chickens and roosters continue to be permitted only on properties that are zoned Agricultural. Staff do not support amending the By-Law to allow chickens and roosters in the S1 Zone.

Consultation

In preparing Report PED260569(a) and crafting the recommendations highlighted herein, consultation was undertaken with the following City of Hamilton divisions and service areas:

- Alana Fulford, Supervisor, Zoning Bylaw Reform, Planning and Economic Development.

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