



City of Port Moody

Report/Recommendation to Council

Date: October 13, 2021
Submitted by: Community Development Department – Policy Planning Division
Subject: Considerations for Backyard Chickens (Hens)

Purpose

To report back on the feasibility of allowing for backyard chickens (hens), including feedback from the Provincial Conservation Officer Service (COS) and additional considerations for keeping backyard chickens (hens) in residential areas in Port Moody.

Recommended Resolution

THAT the keeping of backyard chickens (hens) be prohibited in the City of Port Moody as recommended in the report dated October 13, 2021 from the Community Development Department – Policy Planning Division regarding Considerations for Backyard Chickens (Hens).

Background

At the June 15, 2021, Regular Council meeting, Council considered a request from the Regenerative Garden Farming – Climate Change Mitigation Strategies delegation and passed the following resolution:

RC21/317

THAT staff report back on the feasibility of a bylaw that would allow for backyard chickens that would adequately address predator attractants and proper animal husbandry instructions.

Discussion

Backyard chickens (hens) are currently permitted in some local municipalities, including the City of Vancouver, the City of North Vancouver, and the City of Maple Ridge. The keeping of backyard chickens (hens) can support local food security by reducing food costs and increasing availability of food; however, there are several considerations specific to Port Moody regarding the feasibility of permitting backyard chickens in the City. Key considerations include: the existing high volume of wildlife conflicts; program development and ongoing management requirements; and noise and other environmental impacts.

Recommendation of the Provincial Conservation Officer Service (COS)

The Sergeant of the Fraser North Zone of Conservation Officer Service, in consultation with the Provincial Wildlife Conflict Coordinator and Regional Biologist, provided City staff with feedback on the possibility of allowing backyard chickens (hens) in Port Moody (**Attachment 1**). A summary of the feedback is as follows:

- permitting backyard hens contradicts the COS's efforts in preventing Human-Wildlife Conflicts and places further strain on COS resources to respond effectively to already high call volumes across the zone;
- public safety is a concern due to further wildlife-human conflicts;
- Port Moody currently receives 400 Human Wildlife Conflict calls per year, mostly associated with Black Bears due to unsecured food waste, poor husbandry practices with livestock (chickens) and fruit; and
- the COS has experienced a steady increase with conflicts involving black bears preying on chickens across the Fraser North Zone.

For the reasons listed above, the Provincial Conservation Officer Service is opposed to allowing backyard chickens (hens) in the City of Port Moody.

Additional Considerations

The following are additional general concerns and considerations associated with backyard chickens (hens) in residential areas:

- increased noise from hens;
- increased wildlife and predator interaction, including the potential for dangerous wildlife encounters;
- storage or disposal of bio-waste;
- sale of animals and animal by-product from residences;
- breeding;
- ensuring humane living conditions; and
- escaping birds.

Staff Recommendation

The City values food security and recently endorsed the *Tri-Cities Region Food Security Action Plan (2021)*, which includes a number of actions and policies pertaining to food security in the Tri-Cities. These actions include strengthening collaboration; growing internal capacity; supporting the work of local food system organizations; aligning policies and strengthening regulations to improve food security; investing directly in the local food and agriculture economy; and supporting food education. While backyard chickens (hens) can contribute to local food security, staff do not recommend permitting backyard chickens (hens) in Port Moody at this time based on the recommendation of the COS and other concerns related to the keeping backyard chickens (hens) in residential areas.

Preliminary Policy Framework and New Bylaw Summary

As part of the investigation into the feasibility of a backyard chickens (hens) program, staff reviewed policy and bylaw best practices. Even though staff is not recommending proceeding with a backyard chickens (hens) program at this time, the following is a summary of policy areas that would require further research if Council were to direct staff to proceed with a program:

1. Update the Zoning Bylaw with relevant definitions associated with permitting backyard chickens including hen, coop, run, etc.
2. Restrict use to specific Residential Zones and exclude from other zones.
3. Determine permitted bird species (e.g., allowing only domestic female chickens and prohibiting roosters and other poultry such as turkey, guinea fowl, ducks, quail, or other birds).
4. Consider prohibiting roosters due to excess noise and to discourage breeding.
5. Consider a maximum number of permitted hens (e.g., based on the size of the lot, or standard acceptable number).
6. Update the Noise Bylaw.
7. Consider a licensing process and fee to regulate and monitor backyard chickens.
8. Prohibit the sale of hens, eggs, manure, and other products derived from the hen.
9. Consider requirements for the storing and disposal of manure.
10. Determine coop and run construction specifications for property owners (e.g., minimum square foot per hen, structure height, composition of floor etc.).
11. Consider coop and run setback minimums from buildings, shared property lines, and roads to minimize effects on neighbouring properties and dwellings.
12. Determine requirements for location/siting of hens and security of coop (e.g., remain in the coop or run at all times; secure coop and run design to prevent escape from the property).
13. Determine location requirements for coop and run (e.g., safe location visible from the dwelling to prevent potential wildlife encounters with humans).
14. Determine requirements for coop and run maintenance (e.g., in good repair, prevents other animals from entering, sanitary condition, etc.).
15. Determine requirements for storage of chicken feed (e.g., to prevent wildlife access).

Further research and staff time would be required to create a comprehensive program to regulate the keeping of backyard chickens if Council would like to proceed with a program.

Other Option

THAT staff develop a policy framework and associated bylaw updates and/or a new bylaw to allow backyard chickens (hens) in Port Moody as discussed in the report dated October 13, 2021 from the Community Development Department – Policy Planning Division regarding Considerations for Backyard Chickens (Hens).

Financial Implications

There are costs associated with the additional staff time required to research and develop a policy framework for backyard chickens (hens) including updating related City bylaws, creating a new bylaw for Council consideration, and developing an associated guidebook for property owners.

Communications and Civic Engagement Initiatives

There are no communications and civic engagement initiatives associated with the recommendations this report.

Council Strategic Plan Objectives

The recommendations of this report align with the Council Strategic Plan Objective of Environmental Leadership by preventing wildlife conflicts and avoiding associated environmental impacts related to the keeping of backyard chickens (hens).

Attachment

1. COS Response – Port Moody Backyard Chickens (Hens).

Report Author

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Considerations for Backyard Chickens (Hens).docx
Attachments:	- Attachment 1 - COS Response Port Moody Backyard Chickens (Hens).pdf
Final Approval Date:	Oct 18, 2021

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

Mary De Paoli, Manager of Policy Planning - Oct 13, 2021 - 2:48 PM

Kate Zanon, General Manager of Community Development - Oct 13, 2021 - 2:56 PM

Dorothy Shermer, Corporate Officer - Oct 13, 2021 - 5:29 PM

Natasha Vander Wal for Rosemary Lodge, Manager of Communications and Engagement - Oct 13, 2021 - 5:42 PM

Paul Rockwood, General Manager of Finance and Technology - Oct 16, 2021 - 11:08 AM

Tim Savoie, City Manager - Oct 18, 2021 - 10:06 AM