



REPORT

REPORT TO: Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

REPORT FROM: Susie Spry, Supervisor, Enforcement Services

DATE: March 5, 2021

REPORT NO.: ADMIN-2021-0016

RE: Urban Chickens – Results from the Town’s Public Engagement platform

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. ADMIN-2021-0016, dated March 5, 2021 regarding the results from the Town’s Public Engagement platform on Urban Chickens be received:

AND FURTHER THAT Council provide staff direction on one of the following options regarding the allowance of urban chickens;

1. staff continue to enforce the existing Responsible Pet Owner’s By-law and prohibit backyard chickens on non-agricultural lots;
- Or
2. direct staff to prepare a public consultation process in order to determine appropriate requirements for a limited or ‘pilot’ backyard chicken policy within the Town of Halton Hills.

BACKGROUND:

On September 9, 2019, Town Council passed a motion directing town staff to initiate a public process through the Town’s public engagement platform to provide for residents to offer opinion as to whether they support or not support the keeping of backyard chickens within the urban residential areas of the Town of Halton Hills.

Public consultation was achieved through an on-line survey that was open to the public from March 9, 2020 through to April 15, 2020. A total of 725 participants completed the survey with ninety-eight percent of the respondents residing within Halton Hills.

COMMENTS:

The purpose of this report is to update Members of Council on the results of the survey and to seek further direction on whether or not staff should prepare a comprehensive public consultation process that allows for additional public input on matters regarding restrictions, setback requirements, registration options, number of hens permitted etc.

Based on the results, there was a mixed response between individuals strongly opposed and individuals strongly in support. The majority of public responses indicated support for allowing backyard chickens and an interest for the continuation of dialogue surrounding what conditions and/or restrictions would need to be considered in order to maintain a balanced approach.

Currently, the Town of Halton Hills Responsible Pet Owner's By-law 94-077 prohibits the keeping of chickens within the Town of Halton Hills except on land zoned and lawfully used for agricultural purposes pursuant to any restricted area by-law enacted under Section 34 of the *Planning Act*, R.S.O. 1990 Chap. P.13, as amended. Properties that are zoned agricultural (A) have a minimum lot requirement of 4 hectares (10 acres) which would exclude any property within the urban boundaries.

Through the survey, the following benefits were identified:

Benefits Identified
Locally produced, better tasting eggs
Provides education to children about where food comes from
Pest management
Reduction in food costs to owners
Food security
Environmentally friendly
Make great pets

The following concerns were identified:

Concerns
Noise – Roosters due to noise should not be permitted
Smell associated with chickens and their coup
Education requirements to ensure fair treatment of the animals and care of living conditions, fear of cruelty and suffering
Rodents attracted to chickens, feed and eggs
Public Health issues such as diseases spread to humans or pets from hens or eggs
Wild predators attracted to chickens, feed and eggs
Impact on neighbouring properties

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

This report aligns to the Town's Strategic plan recognizing the value to provide strong leadership in the effective and efficient delivery of municipal services.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact as part of this Report. Any additional enforcement efforts can be accommodated through the existing compliment of staff. Any proposed public consultation strategy will be completed using existing resources.

CONSULTATION:

Staff have consulted with the Director of Communications with regards to the public engagement process.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

A specific list of survey questions were prepared for our residents in order to gauge the interest of urban chickens. The survey was open to the community from March 9, 2020 to April 15, 2020, using the Let's Talk Halton Hill's platform. There were a total of 725 respondents. Should Council direct further public engagement, staff will work with the Director of Communications for the best methods to do so.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:

The Town is committed to implementing our Community Sustainability Strategy, Imagine Halton Hills. Doing so will lead to a higher quality of life.

The recommendation outlined in this report advances the Strategy's implementation.

COMMUNICATIONS:

The public will be notified of Council's decision through various means that support the Town's Public Engagement Charter.

CONCLUSION:

While the purpose of this report is to provide information to Council on the interest of the community with respect to urban chickens and the current by-laws being enforced, Council has the ability to; request staff continue to enforce the existing Responsible Pet Owner's By-laws and prohibit backyard chickens on non-agricultural lots, or to direct staff to prepare a public consultation process in order to determine appropriate requirements for a limited or 'pilot' backyard chicken policy within the Town of Halton Hills.

Note: The second option would require enforcement services to add this into their work-plan and subsequent amendments to the Town's by-laws.

Reviewed and Approved by,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Valerie Petryniak". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Valerie Petryniak, Town Clerk & Director of Legislative Services

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Mills". The signature is bold and cursive, with a prominent horizontal stroke across the top.

Chris Mills, Acting Chief Administrative Officer