

COMMUNICATION 131137

Received From: Pascal Meunier, Director of Protective Services
Addressed To: Committee of the Whole
Date: November 24, 2020
Topic: Information Report – Backyard Chickens

SUMMARY

At the Committee of the Whole meeting held on November 10, 2020, Council directed staff to bring forward an information report to summarize the information received in the last month regarding backyard chickens to provide background for discussion at the November 24 Committee of the Whole meeting.

BACKGROUND

Over the last month, staff and Council have received information from a resident who has backyard chickens and has received interest from others in keeping backyard chickens on their own properties in Carleton Place. Residents in urban settings wish to raise chickens for a variety of reasons including but not limited to:

1. Educational tools;
2. Self-sustaining food production (eggs, as generally meat chickens are not permitted in urban areas);
3. Pest and weed control (notably ticks);
4. Domestic pets and companions.

The present Animal Control By-law No. 122-2018 prohibits the keeping of certain animals. Section 4.1.2 specifically prohibits domestic fowl, which by definition includes “chickens, geese, ducks, turkeys and other such poultry and the young of any of them and also includes game birds as defined in the Game and Fish Act, as amended.”

The firm Municipal Law Enforcement Services (MLES) is contracted by the Town of Carleton Place to enforce the Animal Control By-law on a complaint driven basis. MLES has had a few complaints about chickens over the years in the Town of Carleton Place, as they have had in many of the other neighboring municipalities they serve.

Most of the complaints they received pertain to noise, foul odour, chickens being at large, vermin/rodent infestations, predators such as rats, foxes, coyotes and concerns about the animals’ welfare, particularly during extreme weather conditions. These complaints are of the same nature as those reported in other municipalities where backyard chickens are permitted.

Most municipalities in or outside of the province of Ontario limit the number of chickens permitted to 4-5, though some allow as many as 10-12. Through pilot projects, municipalities have tracked the successes and concerns arising from permitting residents to keep chickens on their property and have amended their by-laws to reflect the information they compile.

DISCUSSION

Staff has noted a number of common provisions in other municipalities' by-laws and pilot project information. Many have provisions regarding the size of lot, size of pen and coop, and setback distances. Most do not allow the keeping of roosters, and the chickens must be a minimum of four (4) months old. Chickens are to be used for egg-laying only; not for meat production. Among the municipalities permitting backyard chickens, many of them stipulate the times of day during which the chickens must be in their pens and coops.

Some municipalities limit the number of licences issued each year to keep the numbers manageable. Costs to residents for permits and/or licences are minimal in most cases, though it should be noted that time is needed to verify all applicable regulations are met on the properties in question.

While the Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) encourages Canadians to practice sustainable agriculture and horticulture, they do recommend that municipalities consider the health and safety issues which can arise from allowing homeowners to raise livestock and poultry. These issues include the risk to human health when the animals are diseased, the disposal of dead animals, and predators being attracted to urban areas. OMAFRA also encourages awareness of food safety regulations which can come into play if eggs are being sold.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this information report

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Director of Protective Services' Report regarding backyard chickens dated November 24, 2020 be received as information.