



Legislation Text

File #: AR-19-488, **Version:** 1

TAMRMS#: B09

1 Year Review of the Backyard Hens Program

Presented by: Tracy Tsui, Planner, Planning & Development Department

RECOMMENDATION:

That the agenda report, January 13, 2020, entitled "1 Year Review of the Backyard Hens Programs" be received as information.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide the Community Living Standing Committee a one-year update of the Backyard Hens Program.

ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITY

N/A

ALIGNMENT TO SERVICE DELIVERY

Service Name:

- Planning & Development Department

Service Definition:

- Process payments, issue licences, and respond to resident inquiries regarding the Backyard Hens Program.

Service Component:

- Hen Licence purchases and renewals.

Current Service Level:

- In-person at St. Albert Place, 8:00 am - 5:00 pm, Monday to Friday, closed on weekends and statutory holidays.
- Emails to hens@stalbert.ca <<mailto:hens@stalbert.ca>>, and phone calls.

ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL (OR COMMITTEE) DIRECTION OR MANDATORY STATUTORY PROVISION

N/A

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Applications

The Hen Bylaw 32/2018 was passed on January 7, 2019. Since then, thirteen (13) households have been approved for a Hen Licence, which permits a maximum of four (4) hens per household. Those licenced are dispersed across the City of St. Albert. Please see the attachment entitled, *Hen Licences Map*.

Applications for a Hen Licence has slowed down during the colder months.

Hen Keeping Training

All program participants have either had experience in hen keeping, or received hen keeping training. Those that have had hen keeping experience were required to complete and pass a competency test. Test questions were developed according to the Government of Alberta's guide called *Raising Chickens in Alberta: A Guide for Small Flock Owners*. Those that have received hen keeping training learned about husbandry practices, coop design and requirements, feeding, winter precautions, health care and biosecurity, waste management, disease recognition and control, breeds and buying hens, end of life plans, and how to be a good neighbour.

River City Chickens, an organization who offers hen keeping training, taught a course in St. Albert in April 2019. The course had 20 attendees that included residents mainly from St. Albert. Four of the 20 attendees applied and were approved of a Hen Licence in St. Albert.

While there is interest in backyard hens, it should be noted that taking the course does not necessarily indicate that people will go through with getting hens. The course helped show a realistic indication of the work and costs involved with hen keeping, and residents may decide that it is not a good fit for them or not the right time.

Program Feedback

Some of the program participants have requested that the City increase the maximum number of hens permitted, from four (4) to six (6). Participants felt that the costs involved with building a hen coop should allow for more eggs, as one of the purposes of hen keeping is obtaining eggs.

Administration researched the maximum number of hens permitted in other municipalities, and found the following available information:

- 3 hens - Crossfield (AB), High River (AB)
- 4 hens - Airdrie (AB), Caledon (ON), Clive (AB), Colwood (BC), Grande Prairie (AB), Okotoks (AB), Red Deer (AB), Surrey (BC)
- 5 hens - Kamloops (BC)
- 6 hens - Campbell River (BC), Edmonton (AB), Kingston (ON), Whitehorse (YT)
- 8 hens - North Vancouver (BC)
- 10 hens - Brampton (ON), Niagara Falls (ON)

At this time, Administration believes that amendments to the Hen Bylaw to increase the maximum number of hens is premature, Administration will continue to monitor public input.

Complaints

The Backyard Hens Program operates on a complaints-based approach. Depending on the complaint, Administration may do an inspection. One complaint was received from a neighbour of a hen licenced household, in relation to noise, odour, and concerns of lowered property value. An inspection was done, and Administration observed clucking, but no smell. There is also a lack of evidence that property values will be lowered.

Administration will continue monitoring complaints.

Program Overview

Overall, the results of the Backyard Hens Program are generally positive for Hen Licencees and their adjacent neighbours. There is also a resident-led Facebook group for program participants to join and share hen keeping advice with one another.

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS OR ENGAGEMENT

N/A

IMPLICATIONS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

Financial:

None at this time.

Legal / Risk:

None at this time.

Program or Service:

None at this time.

Organizational:

None at this time.

ALTERNATIVES AND IMPLICATIONS CONSIDERED

Administration is recommending that this report be received as information. As the Hen Bylaw 32/2018 has been previously approved by Council, any changes or modification to the program would require a Bylaw amendment.

Report Date: January 13, 2020

Author(s): Tracy Tsui

Committee/Department: Planning & Development Department

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer: Kerry Hilts

Chief Administrative Officer: Kevin Scoble