

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Chickens on parcels of land less than two acres in size.

Introduction:

This report provides information to committee on options for discussion and consideration on the allowance of chickens on smaller parcels of land less than two acres in size. It includes a previously presented Public Engagement report along with three options for implementation that Administration is seeking feedback on.

Facts (Background Information):

- Our current animal control bylaw does not allow for chickens on parcels of land less than two acres in size.
- The County has been approached twice in the past to reconsider allowing chickens on these smaller parcels of land.
- In 2014/15 a pilot project was proposed to allow for this on a trial basis but was not supported at that time.
- In 2020 residents came forth again asking us to revisit it. Council at that time asked staff to take another look at it. A report was prepared and shared with Council in the fall of 2020. In this report staff researched best practices in other municipalities who had programs, gathered information on the pros and cons and sought feedback from our own ASB and Community Sustainability Committee
- The issue is a very polarizing one and one where those both for and against are very passionate in their views and opinions, as you can see from many of the additional comments made in the survey
- The recommendation from staff was to undertake a formal public engagement process to gate a better sense of what our resident's needs, and wishes are with respect to this issue/opportunity
- Council approved that recommendation and a subsequent Public Engagement Plan (attached) and budget request was brought to council for support, council approved the plan and provided the funding to carry out the engagement.
- The engagement was carried out in May/June 2021 with the results being compiled and rolled up in the attached What We Heard report, which was presented to Committee of the Whole September 7, 2021.
- 785 responses received with 79.5% of respondents indicating strong support for allowing chickens on smaller parcels of land less than two acres in size (targeted property owners on parcels of land less than two acres in size)
- The Agricultural Services Board does not support allowing this with the main concern being risk of disease transmission impacting commercial operations in Parkland County.
- Community Sustainability Committee supports a Pilot Project.
- Commonly cited pros for allowing this include therapeutic benefits of owning a pet, food source, reduce table waste as it can be fed to chickens, waste can be used as fertilizer, and educational opportunity on agriculture and sustainability

- Commonly cited cons for allowing this include noise, smell, increased predation, disease concerns, disposal of animal's when they become sick or no longer produce eggs and associated municipal costs related to any permitting/licensing or monitoring activities

Analysis:

Administration has prepared three options for Committee's consideration, discussion and direction

- o Option 1- Status Quo, maintaining the prohibition of chickens on parcels of land less than two acres in size
- o Option 2 – develop a Pilot Program allowing chickens on smaller parcels of land less than two acres in size through development of a Chickens on Smaller Parcels Bylaw
- o Option 3 – permanently allow chickens on smaller parcels of land less than two acres in size by amending the Animal Control Bylaw

Option 1 – Status Quo

- o This option maintains the current prohibition of chickens on smaller parcels of land less than two acres. Administration would be directed to continue enforcing this prohibition on a complaint basis as is currently done today.

Option 2 – Pilot Program

- o This option would direct Administration to undertake a Pilot Project allowing chickens on smaller parcels of land less than two acres in size for a period of two years. This will require development of a Bylaw allowing this activity. It will also require staff to develop a set of guidelines for enforcement of any conditions implemented as part of the pilot program. Public awareness materials/program will need to be developed to assist new owners with proper care and management of their chickens.
- o Administration would track complaints and any other challenges/issues occurring over the course of the Pilot for assessment and report back to Committee and Council at conclusion of the Pilot along with a recommendation on future viability of this activity.

Option 3 – Permanent allowance

- o This option would direct Administration to establish a program allowing chickens on smaller parcels of land less than two acres in size on a permanent basis. This will require amendment to the current Animal Control Bylaw to allow this activity; as well as development of guidelines and conditions for enforcement, similar to Option #2.

If Option 2 or 3 is pursued Administration will develop/amend bylaw as required and bring back to Council to consideration, discussion and decision.

Administration will as part of Option 2 or 3 bring forward the following recommended guidelines for program implementation

- o Program Duration
 - Option 2 – 2 years
 - Option 3 – Permanent
- o Minimum Lot Requirements
 - Accessory to an existing residential use

- Maximum Number
 - Six which must be at least 16 weeks old at time of purchase
- Prohibitions
 - No Roosters
 - No slaughtering
- Minimum Coop/enclosure requirements
 - .37m2 of indoor space per bird
 - .92m2 of outdoor space per bird
 - Depending on size of structure a building permit may be required
- Yard Cleanliness, Health and Safety Precautions
 - Yards are to be always kept in a clean and tidy fashion
 - Remove left over feed, trash, and manure in a timely manner
 - Provide each hen with food, water, shelter, light, ventilation, veterinary care and opportunities for essential behaviors, all sufficient to maintain the hen in good health
 - Have End of Life and disposal plan
- Permitting/Licensing
 - All owners are required to obtain a Premises Identification (PID) Number through the Province of Alberta
 - No municipal licensing or permitting will be required (Option is to develop a formal licensing/permitting process requiring application and approval)
- Education Requirement
 - Owners will be required to enroll in and compete a small flock/urban poultry course
- Enforcement and Monitoring
 - Will be done on a complaint basis (Option is to carry out proactive enforcement with regular checks and monitoring)

Alternatives:

- The County could consider a more involved set of guidelines by putting in place a formal municipal licensing and permitting process, limiting the number of households allowed to have chickens in neighborhoods, changing the number of birds allowed, inspection of chicken coops for compliance and education requirements (all applicants required to take some level of orientation and training with respect to small flock care and management).
- If a formal licensing/permitting program is required Administration feels that could be put in place within existing systems and resourcing for a Pilot or Permanent program
- If a proactive monitoring and enforcement program is required for the Pilot Program Administration could manage that component within existing resources if number of properties allowed to have chickens was capped at 50. Depending on demand service levels may be impacted. If a Permanent program is pursued or Pilot allowing all who want chickens to have them additional Peace Office would be required in the beginning to carry out the proactive monitoring and enforcement at a cost of approximately \$135,000. Additional resourcing may be required if there is substantial take up on the program.

Conclusion/Summary:

Administration will pursue whichever option Committee selects. In terms of recommended guidelines Administration supports the “hands off” approach like what is already in place for animal units on parcels of land

larger than two acres in size. Bylaw outlines requirements and if noncompliance is reported it will be investigated and if necessary, enforced as per the approved Bylaw.

AUTHOR: Dave Cross

Department: Agricultural, Community & Protective
Services

Date written: January 20, 2022