



**Subject: Backyard Chickens in the Urban Boundary**

**To: Council**

**From: Office of the Chief Administrative Officer**

Report Number: 2025-43

Meeting Date: February 25, 2025

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**Recommendation:**

That Corporate Services Department Report 2025-43 be received; and

That Council direct staff to implement the public engagement plan regarding backyard Chickens in the Urban Boundary in Port Colborne.

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**Purpose:**

This report seeks Council's approval to engage with the community and determine if there is support for individuals having backyard chickens in the Urban Boundary (generally more highly populated residential areas) in Port Colborne.

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**Background:**

On October 8, 2024 Council received a delegation requesting changes to City bylaws to permit backyard chickens in the Urban Boundary in Port Colborne. See Appendix A – October 8 – City Council Delegation Speech – Backyard Chicken Bylaw Amendment attached.

Council directed the matter to Staff to review.

The City has the following bylaws/policies related to the keeping of animals:

- Appendix B 4086/81/01 – Respecting the Keeping of Animals
- Appendix C – Farm Animal Policy and Procedures
- Appendix D – 4620/2/05 – Respecting the Keeping of Animals Amendment

The Council of 2014 considered the keeping of chickens in the urban boundary, see Appendix E – 2014 Report on Chicken’s in the Urban Boundary. The Council of 2014 voted to not allow Chicken’s in the Urban Boundary.

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## **Discussion:**

The Niagara Region and Public Health Ontario have the following materials on Backyard Chickens:

- Appendix F – Backyard Chickens – Niagara Region
- Appendix G – Reducing Health Risks Associated with Backyard Chickens

The appendices speak to the risk of illness and outbreaks linked to backyard chickens. The risks include salmonellosis and bird flu. Within the last month, staff can report, bird flu was identified in a goose within the City of Port Colborne boundary.

Both appendices provide owners with a lengthy list of measures to reduce risk of illness.

Staff have reviewed what neighbouring municipalities are doing with respect to Backyard Chickens. At the time of writing this report, the following has been identified:

- West Lincoln - reviewing
- Wainfleet – not permitted
- Grimsby – not permitted
- Pelham – provided for through licensing by-law

Staff propose a Public Engagement process as outlined in this report below to determine if there is support for individuals having backyard chickens in the Urban Boundary (generally more highly populated residential areas) in Port Colborne.

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## **Internal Consultations:**

This consultation is a collaborative effort between the CAO’s Office, Communications, Planning and Development and By-law.

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## **Financial Implications:**

This report is focused primarily on the public engagement activities related to backyard chickens in Urban Boundary areas within Port Colborne. All costs related to the public engagement activities are captured in the 2025 operating budget.

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## Public Engagement:

To support Council's decision making going forward, staff have proposed a public engagement plan that would gather feedback from the community regarding having backyard chickens in the Urban Boundary in Port Colborne. The engagement plan has several high-level objectives, including:

- **Gather feedback:** Engage residents meaningfully through a variety of channels and mediums, both in-person and virtually, to gather input from community members if they support people having backyard chickens in the Urban Boundary in Port Colborne.
- **Identify concerns and opportunities:** Gather valuable feedback to highlight interest, support and/or concerns with having backyard chickens in the Urban Boundary in Port Colborne.
- **Inform the community:** Educate the community on backyard chickens, and ensure information is clear, transparent, and accessible.
- **Ensure transparency:** Share the collected feedback online in a clear and accessible format, allowing both Council and the community to see the input and understand how it informs decision-making.

At this stage, staff recommend an online and paper-based survey / feedback form as the primary means for conducting the community engagement project.

An online survey would launch on March 24, 2025, and would ask multiple-choice and open-ended questions to gauge community members' thoughts on having backyard chickens in the Urban Boundary in Port Colborne. Multiple-choice questions allow for easy collection and analysis of the feedback, while open-ended questions allow community members an opportunity to answer in their own words, offering additional qualitative insights. The survey would close on April 11, 2025.

Since not all community members have access to or are comfortable with answering an online survey, an identical version of the online survey would be distributed in a paper version at various City facilities (City Hall, Vale Health & Wellness Centre, Port Colborne Public Library). The surveys would be collected in a box and then gathered for analysis beginning April 11, 2025.

Successfully communicating about the survey opportunity would be a vital part of gathering enough meaningful feedback to support Council's decision-making process. The Corporate Communications team would launch a comprehensive communications campaign to promote the engagement opportunity, which would include (but not be limited to):

- Sharing information on the City's website
- Posting social media content and events on City channels
- Hard-copy posters with QR codes directed to the online survey shared in key community locations and with community special interest groups

- ...and more.

The backyard chicken engagement project would begin on Monday, March 24 and end on Friday, April 11, 2025. Once completed, results would be collected and analyzed, and will be provided to Council in a comprehensive summary report in May 2025.

This engagement plan ensures residents have a meaningful role in determining how to manage backyard chickens in the Urban Boundary in Port Colborne, fostering a collaborative approach to these important community decisions.

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### **Strategic Plan Alignment:**

The initiative contained within this report supports the following pillar(s) of the strategic plan:

- Welcoming, Livable, Healthy Community
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### **Conclusion:**

Staff are recommending that Council approve the proposed public engagement plan and that a report come back to open session in April 2025 that shares the findings.

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### **Appendices:**

- a. Appendix A – October 8 – City Council Delegation Speech – Backyard Chicken Bylaw Amendment
- b. Appendix B – 4086 8101 Respecting the Keeping of Animals Bylaw
- c. Appendix C – Farm Animal Policy and Procedure
- d. Appendix D – 4620 0205 Respecting the Keeping of Animals Bylaw Amendment
- e. Appendix E – 2014 Report on Chicken’s in the Urban Boundary
- f. Appendix F – Backyard Chickens – Niagara Region
- g. Appendix G – Reducing Health Risks Associated with Backyard Chickens

Respectfully submitted,

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**Report Approval:**

All reports reviewed and approved by the Department Director and also the City Treasurer when relevant. Final review and approval by the Chief Administrative Officer.