

Good evening members of council and to everyone else here this evening who assists with town council meetings. I am thankful to be here tonight to be provided an opportunity to share about something that means a lot to me personally. This topic has been gaining a lot of attention over the years and in our social climate of today something that I believe is more important than ever to consider in municipal policy development.

This is the practice of having backyard chickens. As of today having chickens is prohibited by **Bylaw 6575/30/18**. To be specific, as of today, keeping livestock is considered for agricultural use and only permitted in the agricultural, rural and agricultural purpose only zones. I am asking today that you might consider making an amendment to this bylaw to allow for a small number of hens on property that is zoned residential. I ask for each of you to keep an open mind while I dive deeper to explore the benefits that having backyard chickens offers, as you can imagine these benefits go beyond just getting fresh eggs. Please allow me to explain.

I'd like you to consider how this simple lifestyle change and change in policy can help your citizens meet some of our most fundamental needs—like the desire for autonomy, the drive for mastery, and our connection to nature.

First and foremost, let's talk about one of the most obvious benefits of raising backyard chickens: **access to fresh, nutritious eggs**. If you've ever tasted a freshly laid egg, you will know there really is no comparison to store-bought eggs. First: They last longer and they do not require refrigeration - which helps save on housing costs. Studies show that eggs from backyard chickens tend to be much more nutritious. Free-range eggs contain one-third less cholesterol, one-quarter less saturated fat, and have twice as many omega-3 fatty acids, three times more vitamin E, and seven times more beta-carotene than eggs from commercial sources. And in

addition, research shows that having access to eggs in your diet facilitates the incorporation of other fresh nutrient dense foods in a person's diet. Keeping chickens not only gives you delicious eggs, but you also get the peace of mind knowing you're feeding your family nutrient-dense food. Since you control what your chickens eat, you can ensure that the eggs they produce are free of harmful additives or antibiotics that may be found in commercially farmed eggs. It's a powerful way to take control of your nutrition and improve your overall health, while enjoying the simple joy of collecting eggs each day.

But the benefits go beyond eggs. Raising chickens can also **help reduce waste and promote more sustainable living - something that is essential in today's world**. Chickens are natural composters—they'll happily gobble up kitchen scraps like vegetable peels, leftover bread, and other food that would otherwise end up in the trash. According to research a small flock of chickens can significantly reduce the volume of organic waste you generate. In fact, A single chicken can consume around seven pounds of food scraps per month, which is a great way to reduce the amount of waste going to landfills and minimize your carbon footprint. This also reduces the draw on municipal services in more than one area.

Not only do chickens help with waste, but they also produce valuable manure that's rich in nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. When properly composted, chicken manure becomes an excellent organic fertilizer for your garden, promoting lush, healthy plants without the need for chemical fertilizers. So, if you enjoy gardening, your chickens can provide you with a closed-loop system where nothing goes to waste. It's sustainable living at its best!

Now, let's talk about something many people don't expect from keeping chickens: **improved mental health and well-being**. It's well-documented that interacting with animals

can reduce stress and anxiety. One published study found that people who care for animals report feeling calmer and less anxious. Chickens, with their quirky, social behaviors, offer companionship and hours of entertainment. Whether they're pecking around the yard or following you for treats, chickens have a way of lifting your spirits.

Spending time outdoors, caring for chickens, and reconnecting with nature offers a simple, peaceful escape from the fast-paced, tech-heavy world we live in. This connection with animals and nature can foster a sense of responsibility, purpose, and calm—qualities that are known to improve overall mental health. Plus, I have to say that chickens really do make great pets that are low-maintenance yet engaging, offering the therapeutic benefits of animal care without requiring as much attention as dogs or cats.

Another key advantage of raising chickens is **food security**. In uncertain times, having control over part of your food supply is empowering. According to a report by the United Nations, small-scale backyard chicken farming plays an important role in ensuring local food security by providing a steady source of protein. This is particularly valuable during times of economic uncertainty, fluctuating food prices, or supply chain issues - which became abundantly clear during the recent pandemic.

Raising your own chickens means you're less reliant on grocery stores, and you'll never have to worry about egg shortages. You're in control, and that sense of self-sufficiency can give you peace of mind. In fact backyard chicken keepers experience heightened feelings of food sovereignty, which are strongly linked to life satisfaction and reduced stress.

**I ask you all, who couldn't use a little more of these benefits today?**

Beyond personal benefits, raising chickens can also help **build community and provide educational opportunities**. Chickens often bring people together—whether it's neighbors sharing eggs or advice, or local chicken-keeping groups that exchange knowledge. I have had the pleasure of experiencing this personally! Did you know a survey conducted by the poultry industry reported that 70% of backyard chicken owners say they enjoy sharing their experiences with others, which in turn helps build closer, more connected communities.

Chickens also offer great educational opportunities for both kids and adults. Children can learn about biology, animal care, and sustainable agriculture, all while gaining responsibility and empathy. I have the privilege of working closely with children in a school setting, and I can tell you that they are so interested to see the eggs I am eating and to explore some fun facts about chickens and chicken eggs with me. These lessons can inspire future generations to prioritize environmental stewardship. Whether it's in schools, foster homes, or even rehabilitation programs, caring for chickens can teach valuable life skills like responsibility, nurturing, and the importance of routine—especially beneficial for children and young adults who may have experienced trauma or instability. As a mental health worker I have also had the pleasure of witnessing how these animals can provide therapeutic benefit to people who are in desperate need.

In conclusion, raising backyard chickens offers a wealth of benefits. From the satisfaction of gathering fresh, nutritious eggs to reducing household waste, improving mental well-being, and even fostering stronger communities, chickens are a simple way to enhance your lifestyle. As we face challenges related to food security and sustainability, backyard chickens present a practical, effective way to make a positive impact on both your life and your community.

So, whether you're interested in reducing your carbon footprint, enjoying healthier food, or simply building a closer connection to nature, raising chickens could be the perfect choice for our community. And remember, chickens aren't just pets—they're partners in sustainable living, offering joy, fulfillment, and a little bit of feathered companionship along the way.

Thank you everyone for your time and consideration.

I hope that after hearing my evidence you will consider making a change to this bylaw to allow for a small flock of backyard hens.

## References

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