

November 12, 2020

Members of West Elgin Municipal Council:

My name is Debbie Hope and I am the owner of Dixon's Feed Service Ltd., in West Lorne.

Following an encouraging visit and discussion with Mayor Duncan McPhail, I'd like to present an alternative proposal to facilitate West Elgin allowing for the keeping of backyard chickens.

I don't know if you are aware of the negative effect the recent flyer regarding the bylaw on keeping backyard chickens has had on this community.

Particularly affected are some of our senior residents who derive much pleasure in having their own chickens for eggs, and to give them something to care for and love.

I have had several seniors come to me at the store in tears not wanting to give up their precious chickens.

Further, the suggestion of having a complaint filed against them with the potential of a \$25,000.00 fine has these people (who are also mostly long-time taxpayers in West Elgin), feeling like they are harbouring dangerous criminals and not just a few harmless chickens.

This is heartbreaking for them, and for me. Most of these people are older and are very responsible and care deeply for their chickens and keep very small, well-managed flocks.

It is unfortunate that there are a few irresponsible people who ruin things for everybody else.

Rather than trying to start a petition as had been suggested, I thought it would be more effective to address you directly as a resident and local business owner in this community, with a reasonable proposal. This proposal, if embedded within municipal bylaws, would allow for the safe and discreet keeping of backyard chickens.

As such, I am requesting Council consider creating an amendment to the current bylaw allowing a limit of 4 to 6 chickens, which may be kept within a set of operating parameters that are reasonable for all residents.

I have done research on the by-laws other local municipalities have enacted to facilitate backyard chickens with success.

I have put together a program proposal for the care and maintenance of backyard hen chickens in West Elgin. This has been compiled as a result of my research of many municipality backyard chicken bylaws. A copy of this proposal is included in the package I have submitted.

Some of the highlights of this proposal include:

- Most Municipalities request residents have a copy of a Poultry Resource kit, included here for your review.

- This kit contains “Bio security recommendations for small flock poultry owners”. This has been developed by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. It contains some insights that residents might not be aware of and brings these to their attention.
- Also included is “ How to Prevent and Detect Disease in Backyard Flocks and Pet Birds”. This has been developed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Other Municipalities have also recommend as part of this kit “ Keeping your Birds Healthy” also distributed by OMAFRA, however I have called about this document and found it is no longer in circulation. The other documents I previously mentioned can easily be found online. For anyone who does not have access to a computer I would be more than pleased to print these and have them available in my store in order that the person be compliant with the proposed bylaw.

I was thrilled when Brittany Webster, Clerk of Animal Services from The City of Brampton, returned my call. We went over some questions I had about their bylaws and what challenges they have had. Brittany said the biggest complaints are about residents having roosters. Other than that the next most frequent complaint was residents moving and wanting to surrender their chickens. They have had this bylaw in place for many years now. They do not accept anonymous complaints. She has emailed me Brampton’s Animal bylaws to review. I did not include it in this package as it is quite lengthy, but I can provide it if asked.

Joseph Paddock, from the Township of Clearview, also emailed me to say that over the last 3-4 years they have had no complaints about backyard chickens. They allow 4 backyard chickens in areas zoned residential.

The City of Caledon implemented an amendment to their backyard poultry bylaw last year. They have also had very few complaints and the few complaints they did receive were about Roosters.

Ashley Kassain, from the City of Guelph also responded to my email. She sent me Guelph's amended animal bylaw which allows up to 10 hens.

Ashley also sent me a great document on 'accessory structures'. She said they treat chicken coops as accessory structures similar to sheds. I've included this document as well.

Matt Smith from the Municipality of Meaford told me their bylaw for backyard chickens has been in effect since 2014. Quote: "the bylaw was brought forward along with a comprehensive zoning bylaw amendment and passed by council". "The Municipality's official plan had provisions to encourage urban agriculture where appropriate". End Quote. Matt said occasionally isolated cases of noise mostly pertaining to roosters are investigated.

I've also included a document called Backyard Hens for Hamilton , Ontario. This includes positive facts about backyard hens and Municipality Regulations for backyard hens in Brampton, Kingston, Niagara Falls, Caledon, Guelph, Toronto, and Newmarket.

I want to help my community to be “Progressive by Nature”. Especially this year, with all the challenges with Covid 19, it is more important than ever to empower our citizens to be self-sufficient. If I and Dixon’s can help in any way to further the success of this request and to see this proposal implemented, I would love to help, however I can.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Debbie Hope,  
Owner, Dixon’s Feed Service Ltd.  
West Lorne, Ontario

**Program Proposal  
for the  
Care and Maintenance of Backyard Hen Chickens  
in West Elgin**

**Definitions: :**

**Hen:** A female chicken of egg production age.

**Rooster:** A male chicken (and not permitted within this proposal).

**Hen Coop:** A fully enclosed, well-built structure, that will keep rodent and wildlife from under or within its walls. The coop will be a ventilated and waterproof building, allowing no less than 0.37m per hen as the minimum enclosed area allowed, but not exceeding 10m in total length, inclusive of the hen run. In compliance with the standards of the zoning bylaws.

A comfortable housing for hens that includes nest boxes, perches, containers for food and water.

**Hen Run:** A totally enclosed area, attached to the hen coop, that allows hens access to outdoors.

**General Rules:**

- \* No more than 4 hen chickens allowed. Roosters are not permitted
- \* Neighbours must be notified in writing no less than 7 days prior to establishing a new flock
- \* Follow bio security recommendations as outlined by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.
- \* Hens are to be kept in a well constructed hen coop totally enclosed at all times and continually being well maintained, including chickens being kept clean and dry, all soiled feed and manure removed promptly, area kept odour free.
- \* Hens to be kept in hen runs only – loose hens are not permitted.
- \* Hen coops and runs are to be kept 15m from any school and 7.5m from any church or business.
- \* Hen coops must be kept 3m away from all windows and doors of neighbouring properties.
- \* Hen coops are not permitted in front or side yards.
- \* Food must be kept in a tightly secured enclosure to prevent rodents and must be kept free of moisture that may cause mould and contaminated feed.
- \* Water must be available at all times, free of soiling and debris.
- \* Hens must be locked in from sunset to sunrise.
- \* Any sick, injured or animal needing euthanasia must have the attention of a veterinarian promptly.
- \* Tenants must obtain permission to keep hens on the property.
- \* Chicken owners must obtain and be able to supply a copy of the Resource Kit entitled “ How to Prevent and Detect Disease in backyard Flocks and Pet Birds” distributed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Also “Bio security Recommendations for Small Flock Poultry Owners” by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) both are available online.

