

# **CITY OF FORT SASKATCHEWAN**

## **Notice of Motion – Urban Hens Pilot Project**

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### **Motion:**

That Administration develop, for Council's consideration in the first quarter of 2017, a 2017-2018 Urban Hens Pilot Project including appropriate policy changes, bylaw amendments, and budget/resource requirements.

### **Purpose:**

To consider the notice of motion from Councillor Bossert related to an Urban Hens Pilot Project.

### **Background:**

Several municipalities in the Capital Region and in other parts of North America are exploring their policies and procedures regarding allowing rural agricultural practices in urban areas, which have generally been prohibited until now. This includes further research and policy development regarding the keeping of livestock for the purposes of producing food for personal consumption. Such livestock can include hens, bees, rabbits and other small breed livestock.

Municipalities in the Capital Region that are currently undertaking, or preparing to undertake, a pilot project specific to Urban Hens include the City of Edmonton, City of St Albert, and the Town of Morinville. Strathcona County is currently undertaking public engagement on a draft Urban Agriculture Strategy that includes consideration for urban livestock, such as hens.

Councillor Bossert has gathered information regarding an Urban Hen Program, however Administration has not had the opportunity to review or analyze that information. Should Council agree to move forward with the motion, such a review and analysis would be done as part of the report back to Council in 2017.

### **Administrative Overview:**

There are a number of issues to be considered from a governance, administrative, and operational perspective when moving forward with a project such as Urban Hens. These include:

1. Approval, implementation, and education:
  - a) Criteria outlining who is eligible, location of the residence, size of the yard, and citizen's ability to care for the animals.
  - b) Application and approval processes.
  - c) Education on practices for the proper care and management of the livestock to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the animals, in addition to minimizing the impact of the livestock on the surrounding residences.
  - d) Evaluation process to determine if the project should continue beyond a pilot stage.
  - e) Communication and media campaign.
2. Processes for notification and appeals:
  - a) Criteria for notifying neighbors including the radius to be used, and if full or partial consensus is needed of those neighbors.
  - b) Criteria for appeals and responding to complaints by neighbors.
  - c) Determination if approval is a one-time occurrence or on an on-going basis.
  - d) Clarify if the approval is based on the occupant of the property, owner or renter, or can the use continue even if the property is sold.

3. Regulations and enforcement:
  - a) Process for ongoing inspections of approved properties.
  - b) Understanding the role of Municipal Enforcement and/or Planning and Development in the enforcement of the bylaws and policies.
  - c) Review and amendment of the Land Use Bylaw, Community Standards Bylaw, and Animal Control Bylaw.
  - d) Determination if participants need to register provincially to meet identification requirements for the tracking of livestock.
4. Disposal of the livestock and livestock waste:
  - a) Clarity on how disposal of organic waste and hens if owner discontinues use.
5. Costs and resources:
  - a) Understanding of the impact to City departments which includes Planning and Development, Municipal Enforcement Services, Infrastructure Management, and Legislative (Legal) Services.
  - b) Expectation on the cost recovery goals balanced with the financial impacts to the organization. This includes setting application fees, inspection fees and penalties.
  - c) Although complaints for most City programs are few, there are a number of examples where those few have taken substantial staff time. In many cases these deal with neighbors' disputes often related to the interpretation of whether a bylaw has been contravened, and the expected course of action. These often involve substantial legal costs. These complaints should be anticipated and factored into work plans and enforcement priorities.
6. Impacts to neighboring citizens:
  - a) Understanding the impacts to surrounding neighbors. Noise, smell, cleanliness and health risks must all be managed in addition to ensuring the coops are well kept and their appearance is managed.
  - b) What role do neighbors play after an approval is received.

The City of Edmonton recently extended their Pilot Program as a result of feedback and research on their initial 19 Urban Hen approvals. Several challenges were identified through feedback from Administration and neighboring residents. Roughly one third of the approved properties received complaints from neighboring citizens, such as an excess of birds feeding on chicken food, hens off property, smell, and noise. The City of Edmonton extended and expanded their Pilot Project to go for an additional two years and include an additional 31 approvals to better evaluate outcomes.

While some of the research and preparation for a pilot project can be gleaned from the documents made available by other municipalities, there is need to tailor the project to the City's various bylaws, administrative practices, and organizational structures. The time and expense of implementing such a project should not be underestimated.

## **2014 – 2017 Strategic Plan**

The 2014-2017 Strategic Plan is a higher level planning document providing direction to our organization and in some cases outlining specific strategies. In the first quarter of 2015 Council reviewed and reaffirmed the content and direction of the Strategic Plan. This review provided an opportunity to make mid-term adjustments, which in turn would lead to operational work plans

being adjusted to accommodate that new strategic direction. Some of the major initiatives included as part of the Strategic Plan are:

- ℳ Transit Pilot Project;
- ℳ Organic Waste Pilot;
- ℳ Recreation and Parks Master Plan update;
- ℳ business / industry attraction;
- ℳ future municipal growth study;
- ℳ affordable housing opportunities and infill development;
- ℳ intergovernmental stakeholder relationship development; and
- ℳ development of strategies for future financial requirements

All of the above initiatives and more are integrated into department work plans and budgets. Developing an Urban Agriculture Strategy had not been identified and as such, has not been included within current work plans or the upcoming Budget Deliberations.

#### **Financial Implications:**

The financial impact of undertaking an Urban Hens Pilot Project will be evaluated if this motion passes. This may involve the use of external expertise in that evaluation.

#### **Internal Impacts:**

Resources from a number of departments will be needed to analyze and build a program tailored for Fort Saskatchewan.

#### **Alternatives:**

As Urban Hens Programs are fairly new to the Capital Region, however there are a number of pilot programs underway, Council may wish to delay moving forward to better understand the full impact of such a program. As well, this would allow Council to discuss the inclusion of an Urban Agriculture Strategy as part of the next strategic planning process.

#### **Attachments:**

Attachments have been provided by Councillor Bossert, as part of his Notice of Motion.

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File No.:

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Submitted to: City Council

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