

REQUEST FOR DECISION

DATE: October 28, 2015

Report No. CSS-15-020

TO: Laurie Hurst, Chief Administrative Officer

FROM: Blair McDonald, Director, Community Safety Services

SUBJECT:

Request for Exemption under Animal Management Bylaw – Urban Hens, Binkadi Human Services, Nelson Street

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council not approve the request to alter the types of properties that are allowed to have Urban Hens, and thereby deny the request from Binkadi Human Services for an exemption to Animal Management Bylaw, 2015, No. 2841.

RELEVANT POLICY:

Animal Management Bylaw, 2015, No. 2841
Zoning Bylaw, 1992, No. 2050

STRATEGIC RELEVANCE:

This report is not directly related to Council's Strategic Goals or Priorities.

BACKGROUND:

On April 13th, 2015, Council adopted the Animal Management Bylaw, 2015, No. 2841. One of the changes incorporated into the Bylaw allowed possession of Urban Hens in Single Family and Two Family dwellings. Additionally, the Bylaw increased the number of Urban Hens allowed on Single Family and Two Family dwellings from four to seven.

At the October 5th, 2015 Council Meeting, Binkadi Human Services appeared as a delegation to Council to seek an exemption to the conditions of the Animal Management Bylaw relating to Urban Hens and the restriction to Single and Two Family properties. Binkadi intends to have up to 21 Urban Hens on the properties on Nelson Street, should the exemption be granted. The intention is to keep the Hens in one large coop near the 608 Nelson Street building. In addition to a sustainable source of protein from the eggs

that would be produced, the raising of the Hens would be the responsibility of the residents thereby providing some therapeutic value.

Binkadi Human Services operates out of 602, 608 and 614 Nelson Street. All three of these properties are in Multi Family Residential (RM-1) Zone, as are all surrounding properties. 602 Nelson Street has a lot size of approximately 724 square metres, 608 is approximately 678 square metres and 614 is approximately 668 square metres. The minimum lot size for a Single Family dwelling is 530 square metres and for a Two Family dwelling, it is 668 square metres. Attached are aerial maps and photos taken of the subject property.

ISSUES:

1. Rationale for Selected Option

Prior to adoption of the new Animal Management Bylaw, considerable public input was requested and received. One of the contentious issues that arose, with comments both positive and negative, was surrounding Urban Hens. This was a polarizing issue with equal numbers opposed to as in favour of allowing or expanding the numbers of allowable Urban Hens. A public survey was conducted via the Township Website where there was considerable opportunity for respondents to supply any information they wished. At no point was anything other than Single and Two Family properties mentioned by any of the respondents. While the question of properties other than Single and Two Family was not specifically asked, the preponderance of survey respondents were less concerned about lot size or zoning and more concerned about the manner in which the hens were kept.

After the Animal Management Bylaw was adopted, there were vocal, albeit a small number of, Township residents concerned about, and adamantly opposed to, the changes to the Animal Management Bylaw. Both staff and Council were contacted regarding those concerns.

The Animal Management Bylaw was constructed with considerable community input and as it stands, it strikes a reasonable balance between allowing those who wish to have Urban Hens and those who are adamantly opposed to Urban Hens within the Township.

2. Organizational Implications

Depending on the option chosen by Council, there may be some public backlash relating to the changes, requiring staff time to address. An additional property with Urban Hens may or may not result in additional complaints to Bylaw Enforcement.

3. Financial Implications

There are no significant financial implications.

4. Sustainability & Environmental Implications

There are no significant additional sustainability or environmental implications aside from those already identified to Council when considering the changes for the Animal Management Bylaw.

This additional information is included for Council's consideration. Research shows that chicken manure, when composted, makes a good fertilizer. Additionally, chickens may aid in elimination of some insects that are considered pests. One of the chief reasons many people choose to keep Urban Hens is to ensure an organic supply of eggs as well as to have some local control over food supply. Urban Hens contribute to a sustainable, local food supply.

Some concern has been raised over the potential for the spread of disease as a result of having Urban Hens. Research indicates that avian flu and similar diseases are very unlikely to afflict Urban Hens. These diseases are much more commonly associated with large chicken farms that house thousands of birds in very close quarters. Most often, these diseases are spread through human contact with birds (i.e. humans acting as carriers of infected items on their shoes or clothing). It is very rare for diseases to transfer from birds to humans. Even in those areas with large infected populations of birds, transfer to backyard flocks is rare.

5. Communication & Engagement

As the hens would be confined to the properties on Nelson Street there is not a plan for public communication and engagement. Should Council see fit to expand the zones on which persons are entitled to keep Urban Hens, that information would be announced on the Township Website and via Social Media.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. That Council not approve the request to alter the types of properties that are allowed to have Urban Hens, and thereby deny the request from Binkadi Human Services for an exemption to Animal Management Bylaw, 2015, No. 2841.
2. That Council direct staff to amend Animal Management Bylaw, 2015, No. 2841 to allow Urban Hens on all Multi Family zoned properties.
3. That Council direct an exemption to Animal Management Bylaw, 2015, No. 2841 be allowed for Binkadi Human Services to allow a specified number (up to 21) of Urban Hens on the combined properties of 602 through 614 Nelson Street and further, that Council allow this exemption only as long as Binkadi Human Services remains on those properties.
4. That Council provides alternate direction to staff.