

December 5, 2020

RE: EC18.13 Extending the UrbanHensTO Backyard Hens Pilot Program

To members of the Economic and Community Development Committee,

I am writing in support of the MLS staff report to extend the Urban Hens TO Pilot Program. The pilot program has demonstrated that backyard hens can easily be kept without causing odour, noise, pests or human health problems.

First, I would like to extend deep appreciation to City staff who have taken time during an incredibly difficult year to carefully consider the pilot program.

I would like to suggest three amendments to the staff report:

1. Extend the pilot program to other wards where the Councillors are willing to run the pilot.
2. Extend the pilot program for two years.
3. Consider including community henkeeping pilot projects, making access to chickens and eggs possible for residents who don't have back yards (much like community gardens).

Community henkeeping: The staff report correctly points out that many newcomers, seniors, vulnerable individuals, and Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) disproportionately reside in apartment towers, and that 40% of families living in apartment towers are low income.

Much like community gardens, allowing community hen projects could make a protein source available to residents living on low incomes while still meeting city regulations. These should be explicitly allowed along with backyard hens.

While Parks, Forestry and Recreation is not open to having pilot projects in public parks, other sites are possible (such as schools, community agencies or faith organizations). For some very successful examples of community henkeeping in schools, see <https://ashburycommunitygarden.weebly.com/chickens-in-the-garden.html> and <https://www.kitchen garden foundation.org.au/>

Having control over the food you eat is the basis of food sovereignty. Many people keep backyard hens to ensure they have healthy food to eat. They want to eat eggs that have been produced in a humane way.



Many people consider their hens to be beloved pets, in much the same way as others consider their dogs and cats to be family companions.



*1 Ashbury Community Garden, Canterbury
NSW, Australia*

Keeping backyard hens is a common urban practice throughout North America. (For example, 94 of the 100 largest cities in the U.S. allow backyard hens.) A bylaw legalizing backyard hens in Toronto should follow well-established guidelines and regulations that prioritize animal health and human safety. Such standards are commonly and straightforwardly enacted in cities across North America in enabling bylaws.

As the staff report says, “There have not been any significant issues with the Urban Hens TO pilot program.” The pilot has demonstrated the safety, security and benefits of backyard hens.

I urge you to support the extension of the Urban Hens TO pilot project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rhonda Teitel-Payne'.

Rhonda Teitel-Payne

Co-coordinator

Toronto Urban Growers

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