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[Board gives thumbs up to backyard chickens](#)

Posted on 15 December 2010.



Town planning manager Lauren Blackburn showed pictures of back yard chicken pens. (David Boraks/DavidsonNews.net)

By DAVID BORAKS

DavidsonNews.net

Davidson's Town Board on Tuesday voted 5-0 to allow residents to raise a small number of chickens in their backyards, within the town limits. The board also unanimously approved a planning ordinance amendment that prohibits future construction of buildings that front only on an alley. And commissioners revised and then approved new guidelines for town funding of local nonprofit agencies.

'URBAN CHICKENS'

Raising chickens once was permitted in town, but the rules changed as the population grew. A renewed interest in local food and sustainability prompted Davidson's Town Board to consider reviving backyard chicken coops.



Town board voted to allow these in your back yard. (David Boraks/DavidsonNews.net)

Tuesday night's vote means residents may keep up to four hens on their lots, with some conditions. The change would not apply in newer neighborhoods where restrictive covenants or homeowners associations forbid the practice.

Davidson joins Charlotte, Asheville, Chapel Hill, Raleigh, and Durham among North Carolina towns

allowing chickens.

The town's zoning rules prohibit keeping geese, ducks, chickens or other fowl at private residences. Planning Manager Lauren Blackburn said before Tuesday's vote that some residents asked the town for the change last year. Tuesday's amendment pertains only to chickens.

Cindy Reid, Davidson's affordable housing coordinator who also advises the town on legal issues, said the town decided on the four-chicken limit after research on ordinances and practices elsewhere.

Four chickens was a common limit, and "we found four really is enough to produce enough eggs for a family. In general terms, a hen lays an egg per day – (that's) an egg per person for a family of four," Ms. Reid said.

"If have too many more ... you'll end up producing more than a family of four can use," Ms. Reid. said.

The revised ordinance limits residents to four hens. Roosters remain prohibited. Other conditions include:

- Slaughtering must be done indoors
- Chickens must be kept in a secure enclosure at night, and in a pen or fenced backyard in daylight.
- Coops must be least 10 feet from property lines.
- Chicken coops must be kept neat and cleaned regularly to prevent odors.

If problems arise, the town is hoping residents will work them out among themselves, according to Commissioner Tim Dreffer. "If you're a neighbor of somebody that has urban chickens, (we hope) that you'll be cordial and if you have any issues you'll go directly to the neighbor. Who knows, maybe you'll get some eggs," Mr. Dreffer said before Tuesday's vote.



Town board members (from left) Connie Wessner, Tim Dreffer and Laurie Venzon laugh after Commissioner Brian Jenest (right) asked if chickens were like pets. (David Boraks/DavidsonNews.net)

Ms. Blackburn said she interviewed her own neighbors in Charlotte, where chickens are allowed. In a presentation, she showed pictures of chicken pens and chickens in Charlotte backyards.

The discussion before Tuesday's vote had a few light-hearted moments, as when Ms. Blackburn observed: "Some families I interviewed are very fond of their hens. Close relationships."

That prompted Commissioner Brian Jenest to ask: "Can you pet them? Are they like a cat?"

Download a copy of the new ordinance from the Town website, [CLICK HERE](#)>

RELATED COVERAGE: See our Dec. 14 preview, ["Board to vote on allowing 'urban chickens'"](#)

NONPROFIT RULES

Also at Tuesday's meeting, the board approved new guidelines for how the town appropriates funds for local nonprofit groups. Under the new process, the mayor will appoint a committee of residents to review applications for funding annually. Organizations must provide services within in the town of Davidson, and offer services that town doesn't provide itself.

The town manager would tell the committee how much money it has to work with every year, and then incorporate the committee's final recommendations into his budget. Agencies receiving funding also will be required to provide reports to the Board of Commissioners showing how they're meeting their objectives.

The 5-0 vote came after a variety of revisions to the draft amendment. Pam Dykstra, president of the Davidson Lands Conservancy, asked the board to delete a requirement that nonprofits submit an annual audit report, which could be costly. She said the conservancy, which already receives town funds, "adheres to sound accounting principles. ... An audit may well cost us more than what we receive (from the town)," she said.

The new guidelines mention no specifics or limits on the amount of funding the town might provide. The town already provides thousands of dollars a year to groups such as the Davidson Housing Coalition, Ada Jenkins Center, Davidson Lands Conservancy and other groups.

The new guidelines also establish a separate application process that would give grants of up to \$1,000 to help start new nonprofits aimed at fulfilling unmet needs in town.

Download the guidelines as they were proposed before Tuesday's revision (PDF), [CLICK HERE>](#)

Download a copy of the nonprofit start-up grant application, (PDF) [CLICK HERE>](#)

BUILDINGS ON ALLEYS?

The board approved, 5-0, a proposal to change the town planning ordinance to prohibit construction of buildings that face only alleys. Town officials defined an alley as a narrow, 1 lane street and said it could present a public safety risk.

The ordinance formerly said buildings must front on a public street, alley, or pedestrian way (such as a courtyard in a condo complex).

Download the former ordinance language and the changes (PDF), [CLICK HERE>](#)

AGENDA AND DOCUMENTS

The full agenda for Tuesday's meeting is available [on the town website, with](#) links to download related documents.

This post was written by:

[David Boraks](#) - who has written 3955 posts on [DavidsonNews.net](#).

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3 Responses to “Board gives thumbs up to backyard chickens”

1. [Gary Kerr](#) says:
[December 15, 2010 at 5:37 pm](#)

I have Davidson's new town logo ready. (Apologies to Judith Meagher, whose painting of chickens is titled "Walk This Way.")



Gary Kerr lives in River Run and runs the art printing business [Fine Art Impressions](#).

2. [Sally Gordon](#) says:
[December 15, 2010 at 8:24 pm](#)

That is beautiful artwork! I do hope there is a community chicken coop by that gorgeous artwork in front of the community Post Office. It is all just so organic and so sustainable! Exciting! I do trust that future crime reporting will highlight any chicken crimes, including but not limited to, criminal slaughtering of chickens outside the confines of the owner's home. No twisting of necks in the coop? And excessive cackling? Nope, not allowed...not in Davidson. Glad our leaders are focused on these

important issues.

3. *Sandy Blackwell* says:

[December 15, 2010 at 9:57 pm](#)

Hi! in addition to the above NC towns that allow chickens, Huntersville has allowed them for many years. We live within the town limits and have had 4-5 chickens for a number of years. We currently have two in a movable “chicken tractor”. Their eggs are delicious!

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