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Chickens now legal in Gulfport; henpecked council relents

By Sheila Mullane Estrada, Times Correspondent
In Print: Sunday, February 8, 2009



[MARTHA RIAL | Times]

Suwannee Conroy-Baarsch, age 4, holds a Barred Rocks chicken outside her Gulfport home. After months of debate and comments from residents, the city has decided that residents can keep up to 10 chickens.

GULFPORT — The great chicken debate is over, and the chickens won.

Residents of this funky Pinellas County city should be allowed to raise chickens without breaking the law, the City Council decided this week.

Until Tuesday's vote it was illegal to keep even one chicken in Gulfport. Now you can have up to 10.

Backyard chickens are a "huge movement going throughout the country," said council member Michele King, perhaps the most vocal advocate for backyard chicken coops. At one point during Tuesday's City Council meeting, she held up an Atlanta newspaper article about a Georgia "chicken whisperer."

"If we don't do this," King added, "we are not moving forward."

Council members Judy Ryerson and Bob Worthington voted against the measure.

The vote ends months of debate that prompted a flood of pro-chicken phone calls, letters and e-mails, and visions of tearful children.

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Bay area residents who find



themselves struggling to survive paycheck to paycheck.

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No matter how bad things got for Lex Salisbury, CEO of Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo, no matter how many officials called for his job, no matter how swiftly his zoological empire came undone, it is not fair to blame the monkeys.

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Senior... ..

"This has been before us many, many times before and generated a tremendous amount of discussion. I want this to be the final decision and vote," Mayor Michael Yakes told the council.



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Is this the Russell Rhodes surveillance video?

The great chicken debate began last summer when a member of a backyard chicken flock loudly announced she had laid an egg.

A nearby police officer heard the noise, investigated and cited the homeowner, Briggs Monteith, with violating city code.

Over the next six months, Monteith, his wife, Jennifer Conroy, and their two daughters — Peregrine, 7, and Suwanee, 4 — became regular visitors to City Hall as the council debated, voted for and then against allowing chickens in the city.

"I am here hopefully for the last time," Conroy said Tuesday, as her two daughters ran up to the podium to stand beside her.

Conroy held up a carton of eggs she said her chickens laid that morning, and asked the council members to "let our chickens rest easy and become legal citizens of Gulfport."

[Last modified: Feb 06, 2009 09:49 PM]

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Comments on this article

by Annie

Feb 06, 2009 07:04 AM

I can't wait until the roosters begin to crow...let us know how that goes :o) Does this mean owners can bring their pet chickens into restaurants?

by Ryan

Feb 06, 2009 01:31 AM

Its always nice to see democracy in action and a reduction in the number of laws on the books. Only in Florida would a police officer actually waste his time investigating a chicken coop (and then be enough of a jerk to cite someone for it).

by Melanie

Feb 05, 2009 10:02 PM

Hurray - prayers for the chickens and their people are answered!

by Terry

Feb 05, 2009 05:15 PM

congratulation to Gulfport. And to Michele King for having common sense. Maybe there will be to follow the lead.

by Don

Feb 05, 2009 04:42 PM

Let the chickens become legal citizens ?Whats next? Free bus passes for senior chickens, Feed on wheels,disabled ramps to the coops,Medicare chicken friendly Electric scooters with attached blue disability parking permits? Good grief.

by Kathryn

Feb 05, 2009 12:50 PM

To Troy: I just read an article in Mother Earth News that stated it is the overpopulated commercial chicken/egg farms that have a problem with flu - not free range homegrown chickens. Do some research for you offer your opinion.

by ladywatcher

Feb 05, 2009 12:50 PM

i have to listen to roosters all aday long where i live, and i live on 54th avenue north and 49th street, that some, no speaka english, have in their back yard and no one wants to do anything about them, i feel like i live back on the farm..get real.

by Chloe

Feb 05, 2009 12:44 PM

Great. Good news.

by Jack

Feb 05, 2009 12:23 PM

Hooray for the people and chickens. One of the best things I liked about Key west was the chickens. Every town should have the right to raise chickens and Peacocks (that's the bird that sounds like someone is beating a child.)

by Robert

Feb 05, 2009 12:22 PM

If any of those chickens get loose and find their way onto my property, you will never see that chicken again. Robert Calcagni

by Tom

Feb 05, 2009 11:18 AM



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