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## Fernie in a flap over backyard chickens

Feathers may fly next week at a town hall meeting called by council next Wednesday to hear residents' views on whether the City of Fernie should pursue a bylaw allowing chickens and bees in local backyards.

Currently, zoning laws allow "keeping of small animals" in rural residential housing (such as RDEK areas in West Fernie or Dicken Road), but there is no mention of animals in municipal residential zoning.

The Districts of Sparwood and Elkford said this week they do not have zoning for backyard chickens and have had no requests to pursue the issue.

In a report to the City of Fernie, Planning Director Bruce Lennox said B.C. municipalities that allow backyard chickens in standard-sized lots are Invermere, Vancouver, New Westminster, Victoria, Nanaimo and Esquimalt.

Whistler, Kimberley, Parksville and Squamish do not allow backyard chickens. Golden is considering allowing chickens in larger subdivisions only.

Lennox added that municipalities that have allowed chickens have placed restrictions on the number of chickens, the gender and age of chickens and the coop setback from property lines. Chicken coops are registered and monitored.

Vancouver budgeted \$20,000 per year for a facility for neglected chickens, while other municipalities ran courses on chicken rearing for interested households.

He said the City of Fernie has four options: change the bylaw to allow chickens, keep the bylaw as it is, create a trial community coop at the Community EcoGarden or put extra restrictions on rural residential zones properties within the city to ensure chicken coops have electric fences to keep away predators.

Fernie Mayor Cindy Corrigan said next Wednesday's meeting will include a panel of experts to give information on the issue, as well as a chance for residents to give their views on the subject.

She added: "Council needs to make the decision for the good of the whole community and that is why we need to have this meeting to find out all the different views on the subject."

Published: November 24, 2010 3:00 PM

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