

Food Freedom

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Sarasota FL prepares to welcome backyard chickens

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By Jackie Barron

[Tampa Tribune](#)

Move over dogs and cats, city leaders have taken the first step in letting chickens roost in backyards. Tuesday night city commissioners voted unanimously in support of a new ordinance allowing residents to have up to four hens. No roosters allowed.

“If it crows, it goes. We’re going to be firm about this,” said Jono Miller, who helped lead the initiative to allow chickens in the city.

“Some people are concerned about the safety of their food, some people are animal welfare folks who don’t like seeing chickens confined in cages, some people want kids to know where their food comes from,” Miller said about those in favor of the issue.

Citizens Lobbying for Urban Chicken Keeping, or CLUCK, has worked with city officials for more than a year to develop an ordinance that addresses everyone’s concerns and still allows chickens.

Sarasota joins a list of major cities, like New York and Chicago, in the urban chicken movement.

“When chickens hit their stride they lay one (unfertilized without roosters) egg a day, then as they age that

number will drop off,” Miller said.

He knows to some it still sounds “crazy” that people want to keep chickens in an urban setting. But it’s simple for those who care about chickens, Miller said.

Animal rescue groups, like Sarasota in Defense of Animals, wanted to know what will happen when people stop caring for the fowl.

“Yes, it’s an issue,” Miller said about the matter of abandoned chickens. “But we want people to be responsible pet owners and we want them to understand it is a commitment, it’s not a fad. It’s not something to do with your kids and get rid of them.”

The new ordinance requires chicken owners build a coup to safely house hens at night and keep them at least 25 feet from neighboring property. The chickens won’t be officially allowed to be housed in the city until commission takes a final vote in two weeks.

3 Votes

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