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Residents flock to backyard chicken coops

FRANCES BARRICK
RECORD STAFF

WATERLOO

Chickens could be laying eggs in Waterloo backyards if 70 residents have their way.

"Having chickens in the city is nothing new," said Matthew Bailey-Dick, a founder of the Waterloo Hen Association, a group of city residents who want to raise hens at home.

In a letter to city council, the group asks Waterloo to follow other cities across North America and pass a bylaw that would permit small-scale urban chicken farming.

City clerk Susan Greatrix said staff are studying the issue. "There is no bylaw that says you can't have chickens," she said.

Bailey-Dick wants to keep four to eight hens to provide eggs for his family of seven. The chickens would also provide a source of fertilizer, he said, and caring for them would be a fun activity for his three children.

"It is a very tangible way to contribute to food security," the William Street resident said.

Bailey-Dick said he has spoken with his neighbours in his downtown Waterloo neighbourhood and none said they'd object to his raising chickens in a coop that already exists in his backyard. He doesn't plan to keep roosters.

"Roosters can be quite a bit more boisterous than hens."

Raised on a farm near Arthur, Bailey-Dick said he has experience caring for chickens.

The Mennonite pastor said Niagara Falls allows chickens as long as they are not at large. Chickens kept in pens or coops are also allowed in London.

Waterloo Mayor Brenda Halloran said she's received e-mails from three people interested in urban farming.

"We are looking at the whole situation," she said.

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