

**CITY OF ESCANABA
PLANNING COMMISSION
Official Proceedings – Thursday, November 9, 2023**

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

A meeting of the Escanaba Planning Commission was held on Thursday, November 9, 2023 at 6:00 pm in Room C101 at City Hall, 410 Ludington Street, Escanaba, MI 49829.

Chair Hellermann called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

ROLL CALL

Chair James Hellermann:	Present	Commr. Kasja Nelson:	Present
Secretary Roy Webber:	Present	Commr. Christiana Reynolds:	Present
Commr. Patrick Connor:	Present	Commr. Mark Sadowski:	Present
Commr. Michael Harris:	Present		

With seven in attendance, a quorum of the Planning Commission was present.

ALSO PRESENT

City Administration:

Tyler Anthony, Planning & Zoning Admin.	Brianna Ecklid, Confidential Secretary
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Others:

Susan Corwin	Katrina Willette
Dr. Toskhan Cooper	Carla Welsh
Mike Segorski	Ann Fix

Four other unnamed individuals were present.

MINUTES

A motion was made by Harris to approve the October 12, 2023 minutes as presented. Supported by Webber. MOTION PASSED.

AGENDA

A motion was made by Sadowski to approve the meeting agenda as presented. Supported by Nelson. MOTION PASSED.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

None.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

PH1: Zoning Text Amendment – Chicken and Ducks

The Commission held a public hearing on a proposed amendment to the zoning code, which would have allowed for the keeping of chickens and ducks in the City by license. This was the second public hearing on the matter, with the first being held at the Commission's regular meeting in October. It was postponed at that time, allowing staff time to contact other area

cities which had allowed chicken keeping. Anthony introduced the agenda item, and he described the history of the proposed amendment to that point. He explained the methods used and read a summary of responses received of both the Cities of Marquette and Ishpeming.

Harris then asked if that meant there were no violations; Anthony answered that it did. Hellerman asked if any other cities had stricter rules than those in the proposed amendment; Anthony answered that most seemed to be less strict. He continued, noting that Ishpeming reported to have had more issues with beekeeping than they did with chickens, which were then duly fixed.

Chair Hellermann opened the public hearing at 6:13 PM.

Katrina Willette, resident of Wells Township, spoke in favor of the proposed amendment. She began by asking whether her garage could be a compliant enclosure for chickens. Willette added that the garage was heated, and that she had the option to add a run for the chickens to move about outdoors. She indicated that her 17-year-old son was autistic, and that his health was greatly assisted by chicken keeping. They originally resided in the Boise, Idaho and Payette, Idaho areas. In those places, chicken keeping was allowed, and her family kept them for both eggs and for her son's health. By having the daily routines and responsibilities of chicken keeping, her son had something to look forward to each day. Because he had to take care of the animals, her son was more interested in taking care of himself. But with that option off the table here in Escanaba, the health of Willette's son did decline. She agreed with the rooster prohibition due to their noise and aggressive habits. Finally, Willette questioned whether the City could still refuse her the ability to keep chickens if a doctor approved the birds as service animals.

Once Willette finished speaking, Harris asked her to restate her address. Willette claimed to be a resident of Escanaba, stating that she was "riding [the city limits] line". She then claimed that her neighbors had to give up their chickens due to the Escanaba's chicken prohibition.

[Note: Staff looked for Willette's address in City documents after the meeting. While Willette's mailing address was in Escanaba, she actually resided in Wells Township, about one mile outside the city limits. As to who caused her neighbors to give up their chickens, it could not have been the City of Escanaba, and was likely to be Wells Township instead.]

Hellermann asked Anthony to answer Willette's question on the garage being used as an enclosure. Anthony then asked Willette whether the garage in question was attached to her dwelling or not. Willette stated that it was an attached garage. Anthony then answered that it could not be used for an enclosure because it was an attached one. Harris asked Anthony whether this could be avoided by a variance. Anthony stated that he did not know.

Susan Corwin, resident of Escanaba, also spoke in favor of the proposed amendment. She directly asked Anthony what the cost of permitting and licensing would be for chicken keeping. Anthony responded, stating that he could not answer a speaker's question during their given three minutes. Corwin noted his response as rude. Anthony apologized for the impression of rudeness and repeated that he could not speak during her time. Corwin again noted Anthony's rudeness, and Anthony began to apologize again. Corwin cut off his response and continued. She reiterated that chicken keeping was very helpful for autistic children. With people keeping

chickens in the city, Corwin suggested that 4H club membership would have increased. She concluded, adding that the eggs and meat could have been donated to local food banks.

Dr. Toskhan Cooper, who did not state his place of residence, also spoke in favor of the proposed amendment. He wished to expand the dialogue with medical opinions, as he was a medical doctor. Cooper explained that both home-raised and farm-fresh chicken eggs were found to be more nutritious than store-bought eggs. They were also proven to contribute to a healthier body and immune system, and that they tasted better. He then offered to correct statements he had seen and heard in opposition to the proposed amendment. Regarding avian flu: chickens not kept in factory farm conditions were much healthier than those kept in such conditions. Regarding climate change: environmental impacts were reduced by having backyard-sourced chicken eggs in many ways. Since such eggs did not need to be refrigerated the same as store-bought eggs, less electricity was used for their storage. And with the need to ship eggs long distances eliminated, created pollutants were also slashed. Kitchen waste was also reduced because chickens could eat food scraps, and their own waste could be used in composting. Regarding odors: he quipped that if the smells bother someone, maybe that person should not have chosen to live in a town with a paper mill and pot shops. He concluded with the notion that he wanted his daughter to learn about animals in a unique way.

Carla Welsh, resident of Escanaba, also spoke in favor of the proposed amendment. She wished to keep chickens because she wanted to provide healthy food for her family, and to show her daughter and other children the value of hard work and respect for life. She explained that she lived close to a house which was the home of one to four dogs. Often heard barking for anywhere from a few minutes to hours, the dogs caused other dogs in the neighborhood to bark as well. In contrast, Welsh noted that clucking hens were not as loud as barking dogs. She asked if, since her neighbor could have loud dogs, then why couldn't she have less noisy birds? Welsh also noted that chicken odors were not any better or worse than those created by nearly all human activity in urban settings. If a coop were kept in good condition, then odors would be kept at near-undetectable levels. And if a person cannot maintain that coop, she said that the City should then have the right to revoke a permit. Welsh added that permits should be available for low or no cost for those who are constrained by food prices. If allowed, Welsh and her family were certain to keep chickens.

Mike Segorski, resident of Escanaba, also spoke in favor of the proposed amendment. He stated that he was a life-long farmer at heart, being that he was raised on a farm. Since moving into the City, he missed having chickens. Segorski noted his concern for the cost of permits and licenses, adding that reducing the cost for families burdened by food prices should be a main concern. In his opinion, reducing permit and license fees would help chicken keeping become more cost effective for those families.

Ann Fix, resident of Escanaba, also spoke in favor of the proposed amendment. She explained that she does organic gardening, growing most of her food in her own backyard in the City, with the help of composting. Fix noted her agreement with Welsh that barking dogs were more of a nuisance than chickens could ever be. Returning to composting, she stated that chicken excrement, when composted properly, was fantastic for gardening. She hoped that the City would move forward with the proposed amendment.

With no further verbal comments made, Hellermann then asked staff to read any written comments received. Anthony read aloud such comments which were received for the public hearing (see exhibits A through C). After Anthony finished reading the comments received of Daniel Blevins and Melissa Miller (see exhibit A), Hellerman noted its excessive length. He added that short, succinct letters were received better than those which were not. Harris indicated that in-person comments were limited to three minutes, but the comments in question took four and a half minutes to read aloud; the difference seemed unfair in his opinion.

With Hellermann's approval, Anthony did not read aloud a portion of the comments received of Joyce Anderson. That portion was a newspaper clipping of a "Letter to the Editor" printed in the Daily Press. In Hellermann's opinion, that clipping did not constitute a true written comment by Anderson and, therefore, did not need to be read aloud.

With no further comments, Chair Hellermann closed the public hearing at 6:37 PM.

Hellermann addressed some questions raised during the public hearing. First, he reiterated that the number of chickens allowed was to be capped at six birds. Second, he stated that the Commission did not engage in fees or money, but that they could only advise the City Council on such matters. At Hellerman's invitation, Anthony noted that the permit fee was to be, in most cases, only \$50. With some rough calculations, he estimated that a family could have saved up to \$600 annually on eggs alone. Hellermann explained to the audience that such matters as permit and license fees should be addressed to the City Council.

On another question, Hellermann asked Anthony why an attached garage could not have been used as an enclosure. Anthony explained that it was a standard recommended by both the MSU Extension and the UP Food Exchange. Both served as expert source materials for the draft. Each included restrictions against attaching a chicken enclosure to a dwelling, based on health and safety concerns for both humans and the animals.

Hellermann reminded all present that a rooster prohibition had always been planned. He added that limiting the allowed numbers of birds was always planned, as well. He rebuked the letter writers for apparently not reading the proposed amendment, since nearly all complaints related to matters that had already been addressed. Because of that, the letters caused more confusion on the topic than he found acceptable.

Connor wondered if a time limit or "sunset clause" could be set on the proposed amendment, either for six months or one year. Such a limit would have allowed the City to retract the issue. Hellermann, Connor, Harris, and Anthony discussed the idea of a trial period, and how such a thing could work in practice. Hellerman pointed out comments from Ishpeming and Marquette, noting that it took at least a couple years to let chicken keeping settle into both cities. Harris expressed concern over uncertainty caused by such a time limit; if a person invested their time and money into keeping chickens in compliance with the City Code, then it would be a significant loss for them to have the City reverse their decision.

Webber read from a statement he had prepared in advance of the meeting. He stated that people should be able to do things which are not harmful to others. However, he saw that many people opposed chicken keeping within the City, or at least wanted heavy restrictions. While he agreed with many of the positive points, Webber agreed more with people who did not want to

allow chickens. He also worried that City staff would be overburdened by enforcement and administration of chicken-related codes. He left open the possibility that he might be swayed by a time limit on the proposed amendment, but he opposed a permanent solution.

Harris admitted that he did not believe chickens to cause damages or disease, and that he understood the potential benefits of allowing chicken keeping in the City. However, he did believe that most people did not want chickens within the City. He noted that, in all his conversations with people on the topic, he found nobody who was “pro chicken”. He did agree that barking dogs was a problem, though, noting that there needed to be a way to curb it.

Nelson still had concerns on chicken keeping, but she believed that the nutrition, cost, and social benefits outweighed those concerns. She added that she supported chicken keeping in Escanaba.

Reynolds read from a statement she had prepared before the meeting. As part of this statement, she presented research from her students. They focused on three main ideas: individual liberty, community enrichment, and educational opportunities. With the benefits to local food systems, the environment, and to families’ savings already proven, they found the answer obvious. Reynolds, and her students by extension, saw chicken keeping as a good strategy for the City.

Sadowski told of his experiences with chicken keeping when he lived in Kentucky, which was overwhelmingly positive. He explained that odors only become an issue with a flock of 20-30 chickens. On disease concerns, he reported that only 6% of chickens in the United States contracted bird flu, with most of these being in factory farm conditions. He addressed chicken care concerns in terms of seasonal weather. He also noted that food cost-cutting was not a given in all cases.

Hellermann summarized his opinions, stating that both property and human rights trump all else. He felt that some of the objections could be raised for any other animal, and for most humans. Considering that nearly all people who came to speak on the draft amendment supported chicken keeping, he felt strongly influenced by that physical show of public support. Hellermann noted that, in his 10 years of service on the Commission, he had never seen people so engaged with a subject. Thanking all members of the public present, he resolved to decide not on his own opinions, but on those of the community.

Hellermann and Anthony discussed some details of procedure which were normally overlooked. Anthony suggested that the Commission first approve of the proposed amendment, or not. Pending that approval, they would then formally recommend the draft to the City Council. He also asked whether rabbits could be considered for this draft, but Hellermann wished to address that later.

A motion was made by Connor to disapprove of the draft amendment.

Supported by Harris.

Commissioners then discussed whether a sunset clause should be added to the draft amendment. Some would be more supportive of the draft if such a clause was included. Harris asked Connor to withdraw his motion in view of that fact.

Connor withdrew his motion.

A motion was made by Reynolds to approve the draft amendment. Supported by Nelson.

Harris asked whether a sunset clause could now be added. Commissioners discussed this, but the conversation became scattered. Hellermann restored order, then he called the question.

A roll call vote was taken with the following results:

Yes: Hellermann, Nelson, Reynolds, Sadowski;

No: Connor, Webber, Harris;

MOTION PASSED.

Commissioners then pivoted to the formal recommendation to the City Council.

Offered by Commr. Webber, seconded by Commr. Harris:

RESOLUTION No. 23-01

**RESOLUTION TO RECOMMEND THAT THE CITY COUNCIL
CONSIDER AND ADOPT A RECOMMENDED ORDINANCE**

Whereas, The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (MCL 125.3101 et seq.), hereinafter “the Act”, codified the laws regarding development & use of land, zoning districts & ordinances, and the powers & duties of certain officials;

Whereas, The Act provides that a zoning ordinance, where adopted, may be amended by the legislative body of a local unit of government as described in the Act (MCL 125.3401), and that such amendments may be recommended by a zoning commission in accordance with the Act;

Whereas, The Escanaba City Council, hereinafter “the City Council”, is this local unit of government’s legislative body, and the City of Escanaba Planning Commission, hereinafter “the Commission”, functions as this local unit of government’s zoning commission pursuant to the Act;

Whereas, The Commission, in cooperation with its staff, drafted a proposed ordinance, and that part of said proposed ordinance constituted an amendment to the City of Escanaba’s adopted zoning ordinance; and

Whereas, The Commission held a first public hearing on 12 October 2023 on the proposed ordinance in satisfaction of the Act, and held a second public hearing on 9 November 2023, approving said proposed ordinance on the same; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Commission hereby recommends that the City Council consider and adopt the proposed ordinance titled “An Ordinance to Allow for the Keeping of Chickens and Ducks Within the City” as approved by the Commission; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Commission shall transmit the proposed ordinance and a summary of comments received at both public hearings held on said proposed ordinance to the City Council.

A roll call vote was taken with the following results:

Yes: Connor, Webber, Hellerman, Harris, Nelson, Reynolds, Sadowski;

No: None;

Abstained: None;

Absent: None;

RESOLUTION PASSED.

Chair Hellermann recessed the meeting at 7:20 PM.

Chair Hellermann reconvened the meeting at 7:25 PM.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

NB1: Correspondence – City of Gladstone Master Plan

The Commission received a letter from the City of Gladstone. The letter served as a notice to the City of Escanaba that Gladstone intended to update their master plan. Anthony offered that the Commission should appoint one or more representatives to Gladstone on the subject. Connor volunteered for the position.

A motion was made by Webber to appoint Commr. Connor as the City of Escanaba’s representative to the City of Gladstone for their master plan update. Supported by Harris.

A roll call vote was taken with the following results:

Yes: Connor, Webber, Hellermann, Harris, Nelson, Reynolds, Sadowski;

No: None;

MOTION PASSED.

NB2: 2024 Meeting Schedule

The Commission reviewed a proposed meeting schedule for 2024. In accordance with their bylaws, all regular meetings were planned for the second Thursday of each month.

A motion was made by Harris to adopt the 2024 meeting schedule as presented. Supported by Webber.

A roll call vote was taken with the following results:

Yes: Connor, Webber, Hellermann, Harris, Nelson, Reynolds, Sadowski;

No: None;

MOTION PASSED.

NB3: CIP Advisory Committee

The Commission considered a recommendation to establish an ad-hoc committee. This committee was to have been tasked with drafting the 2024 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). At Hellermann’s request, Anthony explained that such an ad-hoc committee was a generally accepted best practice in many other communities. Hellermann explained for the newer

members what the CIP is. He added his annoyance with the opaque way it was normally done, and that he was excited to change the process.

A motion was made by Connor to appoint a committee of seven with power to draft the 2024 Capital Improvement Program. Appointments shall be Planning & Zoning Administrator Anthony as chair, Commr. Reynolds, Commr. Sadowski, City Manager McNeil, City Controller Becotte, and two citizen members to be selected by the named appointees. The committee shall provide a first draft to the Commission at their regular meeting in April. Supported by Harris.

A roll call vote was taken with the following results:

Yes: Connor, Webber, Hellermann, Harris, Nelson, Reynolds, Sadowski;

No: None;

MOTION PASSED.

Harris asked if members of the public would be able to attend. Anthony explained that it was not required by the Open Meetings Act (OMA), but that it could be made public if the committee wished. Hellermann again stated his enjoyment of this new idea. Sadowski asked Anthony about how many meetings were expected. He responded, envisioning one to two meetings per month, depending on the amount of work to be done.

A member of the audience asked who exactly the Commission referred to by the word “staff”. With Hellermann's approval, Anthony answered that the word referred to the Planning & Zoning Department's staff.

NB4: Master Plan Content Review

Commissioners and staff discussed how to engage with the proposed content review. The intent turned to establishing an ad-hoc committee to conduct the review. Harris noted how having all seven Commissioners work on one thing would have likely become messy. Connor felt that having two or three people conduct the review together was the best way to go.

A motion was made by Connor to appoint a committee of four to conduct the master plan content review as proposed. Supported by Reynolds.

A roll call vote was taken with the following results:

Yes: Connor, Webber, Hellermann, Harris, Nelson, Reynolds, Sadowski;

No: None;

MOTION PASSED.

Appointments to the committee shall be Commrs. Connor, Harris, & Nelson, and Anthony.

NB5: General Updates

a. Ad-hoc Committee – Delta County Planning Commission

Anthony reported that the committee had obtained all the materials they needed to complete their work. Those materials were the current bylaws, historical bylaws, and October meeting draft minutes Delta County Planning Commission (County Commission). In addition to those materials, a written statement by Connor was also obtained. They then intended to draft an

open letter based on those materials. That letter was to then be offered to the Commission at the December meeting.

Anthony noted that the County Commission's October meeting draft minutes were only made public a full 18 days after the meeting. This far exceeded the OMA's eight-day limit. The reason given was that the County Commission's secretary was new, and that she was still learning the office. Anthony also reported that Connor's treatment did not align with the County Commission's bylaws.

Hellerman encouraged the committee to finish their work, as he found the County Commission's actions less than adequate. Hellerman and Harris briefly discussed the City of Menominee's troubles. Three marijuana retailers there had recently been shut down by a court order. That order in turn stemmed from OMA violations made by the City of Menominee. Hellerman voiced words of caution for all in terms of the OMA.

b. Delta County Planning Commission

In summary, Nelson witnessed an incredible level of disorder and a severe lack of understanding. The County Commission did not seem to grasp their role, their duties, nor the general order of action by a public body such as theirs.

Nelson reported that, while the County Commission was very welcoming of her, she found their meeting very dysfunctional. The County Commission spent a great deal of time on whether they should change their minutes before approval. They ultimately approved the minutes, with the expectation that they would go back and change them at their next meeting.

Regarding their rezoning effort, which was a focus of the ad-hoc committee on the County Commission's treatment of Connor, Nelson reported that they decided to drop it. The reason for which being that they did not want to pay for the cost of mailed public hearing notices.

c. Zoning Board of Appeals

Anthony had nothing to report. The ZBA had not met since the Commission's October meeting, and they were not going to meet again until January 2024.

d. Zoning/Land Use Permits

Commissioners reviewed the Permit and PZE (Planning & Zoning Enforcement) Reports. Anthony had nothing else to report. Harris asked about the Sign Inventory category in the PZE report. Anthony said that it was an audit created by his predecessor as part of the Sign Amnesty Policy.

NB6: Training Updates

A list of upcoming training opportunities was highlighted. Some Commissioners noted remorse for their collective lack of training hours. Anthony reminded Commissioners of the Michigan Association of Planning's training video which was made specifically for Escanaba.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

COMMISSIONER/STAFF COMMENT & ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

**A motion was made by Webber to adjourn the meeting. Supported by Connor.
MOTION PASSED.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:52 PM.

EXHIBITS TO THESE MINUTES

- A. Written correspondence from Dan Blevins and Melissa Miller, 10/16/2023
- B. Written correspondence from Dennis and Carolyn Wilbee, 10/18/2023
- C. Written correspondence from Joyce Anderson, 10/24/2023

APPROVAL

~~I, James Hellermann, Chair of the City of Escanaba Planning Commission, do hereby certify that the foregoing constitutes the true and complete minutes of the regular meeting held on 9 November 2023 by the Planning Commission of the City of Escanaba, County of Delta, State of Michigan, made and kept in accordance with the Open Meeting Act (MCL 15.261 et seq.), as approved by said Planning Commission on the _____ day of _____,~~

~~Certified:~~

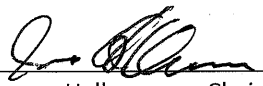
~~Witnessed by:~~

~~James Hellermann, Chair
Escanaba Planning Commission~~

~~Tyler Anthony, Planning & Zoning Admin.
City of Escanaba~~


I, James Hellermann, Chair of the City of Escanaba Planning Commission, hereby certify the following:

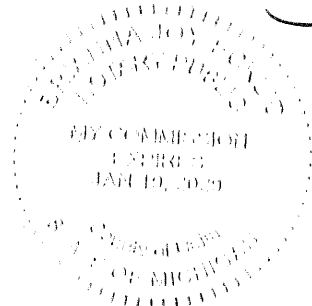
- 1. That the foregoing constitutes the true and complete minutes of a meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Escanaba, County of Delta, State of Michigan, held on 9 November 2023;
- 2. That a draft of these minutes was made available to the public;
- 3. That these minutes, once approved, shall be made available to the public; and
- 4. That all the foregoing was/is made, given, and kept in accordance with the Open Meetings Act (MCL 15.261 et seq.), the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MCL 125.3801 et seq.), the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (MCL 125.3101 et seq.), said City's Code of Ordinances, and said Planning Commission's Bylaws.

 12-14-23
James Hellermann, Chair
City of Escanaba Planning Commission

Draft available on: 11/9/23
Approval date: 12/14/23
Made available on: 12/15/23

Notary Seal:


Brianna J. Ecklid, Notary Public, County of Delta
Acting in Delta County, State of Michigan
My commission expires January 19, 2029



TO: Escanaba City Planning Commission

FROM: Daniel Blevins and Melissa Miller

SUBJECT: Chicken Ordinance

Received 10/16/2023

-TA

I wanted to take my time to offer some information and our opinion on allowing the keeping of chickens or fowl in the city. We think that this is a bad idea for a variety of reasons. Here are the most obvious issues and concerns we have identified.

1. Public Nuisance Complaints

Roosters and hens express themselves by making a variety of sounds, depending on their level of comfort, excitement or fear, or based on what type of activity they are engaged in. For instance, hens are known to cluck for extended periods after laying eggs. This regular crowing, clucking, and squawking often leads to conflict between neighbors. Odor management also poses a significant problem for urban chicken-keepers, often leading to complaints and conflict. Permitting ownership of chickens in our city will inevitably lead to more nuisance complaints and, in turn, more resources and higher costs incurred by police and inspection officials, as well as organizations that care for animals that are surrendered or seized due to neighborly conflict, poor care/conditions, or violations of the ordinance.

2. Abandonment or Killing of Chickens

Unwanted chickens are regularly abandoned by careless or overwhelmed owners. While people may be well intentioned when they decide to set up a backyard chicken coop, they often find themselves unwilling or unable to care for these animals, who can live to be more than 10 years old but whose egg laying capacity declines relatively early on in life. Other challenges, such as the cost of food, the cost of building and maintaining adequate coops, the lack of available or affordable veterinary care, restrictive space requirements, the inability to provide the labor required, noise, mess, or attracting unwanted pests all may prompt an owner to decide to part ways with their flock in short order. This has led to hens being abandoned or being slaughtered without oversight.

3. Exposure to Wildlife & Predators

Our city is home to a variety of wildlife including pigeons, foxes, coyotes, raccoons, skunks, birds of prey, mice, and rats. We're also home to many domesticated cats and dogs. Many of these animals prey on chickens, particularly if they are not kept in predator-proof structures. The presence of chickens alone may not necessarily attract animals, but the sounds they make, their diet, and the waste they produce do. The presence of undesired animals in or around backyard coops can cause serious conflict. For example, predators attracted by chickens can kill pets, or injure citizens who are outside. Residents already have to pay out of pocket to get rid of pigeons, mice, rats, raccoons, skunks, opossums from in and around their homes. The spilled and unsecured food from keeping chicken coops inside the city will only give another food source to allow the pests to proliferate and attract more undesirable wild animals.

3. Further Overburdening Shelters and Rescue Groups

When chickens are surrendered, abandoned, or seized by authorities, it falls to animal rescue groups and sanctuaries to care for them. This added burden comes with significant costs for these organizations, which are typically volunteer-run charities and nonprofits. Rescues must devote time and resources to caring for these animals. Rescue organizations are already overwhelmed and overburdened, and permitting urban chicken-keeping further exacerbates this challenging situation.

4. Lack of Available Veterinary Care

The lack of veterinary expertise in cities is a huge problem when it comes to backyard chicken keeping. Just like other companion animals, chickens need specialized regular care and an urgent care option in the event of an emergency. If backyard hens are allowed in cities, the stark reality is that there may not be enough vets to ensure proper care and to prevent and treat injuries and disease.

5. Diseases and Sickness

Chickens are susceptible to diseases that can cause serious illness and even death both to wild and kept birds. The viruses and bacteria that chickens can carry can also infect people. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), backyard chickens may carry bird flu (avian influenza), E. coli, and Salmonella bacteria, among several other diseases. These diseases are typically spread through the droppings of infected chickens, contaminated food, or the environment that they're kept in—and animals often show no signs of infection. Our city and county are in a great spot to view bird migrations every year! In 2020, the CDC reported salmonella outbreaks linked to backyard birds in all 50 US states, resulting in the hospitalization of 333 people (with 24% of ill people being children under five). Cases of avian influenza have been reported spreading through backyard coops and to wild animals.

6. Killing of Male Chicks

Most municipalities that allow people to keep backyard hens prohibit keeping roosters. This perpetuates the cruel cycle of killing male chicks and exploiting hens as egg-laying machines. When one of these unwanted male chicks slips through the cracks and ends up being kept by someone who believes them to be a hen, there are additional issues that come into play as well—namely, the seizure and rehoming of the (illegal) rooster in an already overburdened rescue facility or the untimely killing of the animal.

In conclusion, chickens, like other farm animals, do not belong in the city. The noise, smell, disease potential, enforcement and inspection costs are totally unnecessary to take on. It increases potential conflicts between neighbors and added costs to homeowners to remove the rodents and other wild animals they will attract. Caring for chickens for the duration of their lives requires significant knowledge and expertise relating to their general care, hygiene, feeding, socialization, and housing. Some people may have this expertise or a willingness to learn, but others who do not may eventually abandon their hens. There will inevitably be citizens that are not responsible, or do not follow regulations. We would like to urge the city to please, not approve any ownership or farm animals in the city limits.

Daniel Blevins

Melissa Miller MSW

Received 10/18/2023
— JA

To: Tyler Anthony, Zoning Administrator

As residents of Escanaba we have concerns regarding raising chickens within the city limits. We have reached out to John Parker, DVM. He is a relative and long practicing veterinarian.

Below are his answers regarding some questions brought forth on this topic.

- 1) Avian flu would be a concern for the birds and potentially people. The current strains are termed "highly pathogenic" for a reason. Would it be humane to obtain/keep birds in enclosures and possibly subject them to HPAI? Completely enclosed birds are at lesser risk.
- 2) For open enclosures: would open netting be required to protect them from birds of prey?
- 3) Chickens as service animals? NO!
- 4) Waste material should be quantified. How big a pile would be allowed? It creates "crazy bad odors"!

We hope this additional information is useful and will help in making an informed decision.

Thank you,
Dennis and Carolyn Wilbee

DENNIS & CAROLYN WILBEE

1918 PARK AVE., ESCANABA, MICHIGAN 49829
8833 ETERA DRIVE, SARASOTA, FLORIDA 34238

CAROLYN :

CELL: 906.420.2025

EMAIL: CWHENK@GMAIL.COM

DENNIS:

CELL: 906.474.9181

EMAIL: DCWILBEE@YAHOO.COM

October 23, 2023

Received 10/24/2023

- JA

Dear Escanaba Planning Commission,

On October 7th I wrote to you expressing my concerns on Escanaba allowing chickens to be raised in the City.

One of my major concerns was the predators and vermin that would be drawn to the chickens.

I am enclosing a letter to The Daily Press from Gen Doyle expressing these same concerns that I raised.

Please consider 42 years of experience of someone who lived on a farm and owned chickens.

Letters

4A

The Daily Press, Escanaba
Thursday, Oct. 19, 2023

DAILY PRESS

The problem with chickens

EDITOR:

I have been following your reporting on the proposed zoning amendment that would allow citizens of Escanaba – any resident – to keep chickens and ducks within the city limits.

I believe you did a pretty good job of trying to present both sides of any kind of controversy that may be viewed.

However, there was one thing that was not brought up by anyone. That is, the type of vermin this kind of “farming” would attract to local neighborhoods. Some of these vermin are in fact on the dangerous side, especially for small children. Further,

how would you control this type of situation? I am speaking of mice, rats, skunks weasels, fox, snakes, aggressive cats of all kinds, coyotes, raccoons and other birds of prey.....owls hawks, seagulls, etc. Dogs have also been known to break in and attack chickens.

Now, not only say all this from experience for having lived on a farm for over 42 years and owning chickens, but I have seen many of these critters in the city limits of Escanaba. There are weasels at the airport, there are coyotes that have been seen along the shore on Lake Shore Drive. We all know that there

are plenty of skunks, and a few snakes around as well. As for mice and rats, ya they're here also.

People who do not have chickens are then at the mercy of those who do. If you have small children, perhaps a sandbox in the backyard or swing set, and the little ones play there. Just think what may have run through there, is watching, dug a hole somewhere to lay their eggs, etc. There is a reason 99% of farm animals are on farms. Heavily populated areas are for people and their safety. Animals spread diseases, bite, go anywhere there is a food

source of any kind. A lot of diseases are airborne. Who can control that?

People, think this through and use common sense. Besides, the proper watering and feeding of a few chickens is a very expensive endeavor for what you get out of it. You have winter, vet bills, at least four daily excursions to the coop. I say all this in defense of the poor chicken who really is at mercy of all that are around it. Please be reasonable and seriously put some reality thought into the 6/7 chickens you want.

**Gen Doyle
Escanaba**

WE DO NOT NEED PREDATORS AND VERMIN DRAWN TO OUR RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD!

Thank You.

J. M. Anderson
Escanaba, MI