



3RD WARD MEETING MINUTES – ALDERMAN DENISE RODD

October 14, 2015

AGENDA

- Tending Chickens and Chicken Coops
- City of Des Plaines Ordinance re: Chickens

GUESTS

Dee Hilbert, Director of Programming, Historic Methodist Campground
Ed Fuhrmann, Volunteer, Chicago Land Urban Chicken Keepers of the Round Lake Area.

WELCOME

Thank you for coming. Tonight, we are holding our meeting because of the interest in having chickens in backyards. Methodist Campground is keeping chickens as a 4H Program and would like to add a goat, sheep or lamb to their program. Our guests, are experienced in the tending of chickens, tending chickens and raising chickens are separate, which will be explained later in the meeting.

Residents are interested in what is required to get a change of ordinance in the City of Des Plaines to allow chickens. Ed Fuhrmann of the Land Urban Chicken Keepers, is experienced in putting ordinance processes and was helpful to change the ordinance to allow chicken coops in private residents in the Round Lake area. Ed will share his expertise providing information and suggestions on how/if to change the ordinance. Currently, City of Des Plaines does not allow chickens.

Turning the floor over to Dee Hilbert, Director of Programming for events at the Methodist Campground.

Dee: CHICKENS – METHODIST CAMPGROUND

Is there anyone here that is against chickens in back yards? Why? What are your objections? (No show of hands). Many that object to tending chickens say it's because of the rooster crowing, the smell, or chickens will not be cared for properly. And many objections are fear based by those not familiar with the tending of chickens. Chickens are expensive and there is a criteria and responsibility to owning chickens. (Cost to taking care of chickens is approximately the same as owning a dog or cat).

Myths about Chickens:

- Roosters: Roosters are not required for egg production. Although, there can be a hen that will take the rooster's role ... but that is all part of the fun of owning chickens.
- Smell: Manageable with good practices. You must keep the coop area dry. A kitty litter box with sand can be used for chickens, but it must be scooped out daily and kept dry. If the sand or hay gets wet in the coop area, chickens are unhappy and when chickens are unhappy, smell develops when coop area is not kept dry.
- Noise: Chickens are pretty quiet unless they are unhappy. And you will know when they are unhappy.
- Allergies and Disease: There could be allergies and known diseases associated with chickens, such as bird flu. The feathers could produce allergic side effects. Salmonella can also be a possibility. Again, the type and dryness of feed, dryness of the coop and fresh water helps prevent many of these issues. Washing hands after tending the chickens and wearing "chicken" shoes is a good practice.
- Property Value will go down: Cities that allow chickens have proven that property values do not change. Chicago and Evanston are 2 examples.

Plus Side to Chickens:

- Fun to watch.
- Fresh eggs.
- Feathers. The amount of feathers that chickens produce can be used in many different clothing items.
- A way for "residents/families" to control the food they eat.
- Tending chickens can teach children where food comes from and is not just bought in a store.
- Educational purposes, such as the 4H program at Methodist Campground. School based chicken coop.
- In some parts of the country there are "rent a chicken" programs.

Chicken Tending 101

- How many hens to a coop? Good number for a coop is 6- 8 hens. Depending on the type of hen determines how many and what kind of egg is produced.
- Why are you having hens? Egg production. What a chicken eats is what produces your quality of eggs, not quantity. Eggs from chickens in your backyard are for your personal use and cannot be commercially sold though eggs can be given to family and friends...sometimes neighbors will trade for eggs (self-sufficient farming).
- Eggs are laid with a coating on the shell, this “coating” is what preserves your eggs keeping the eggs fresh for up to 3 months (approximately) and not needing refrigeration. Store bought eggs are cleaned of that film and since egg shells are porous they need to be refrigerated and have a short life span.
- Chickens are expensive. To get an egg a day (at least) light (natural or artificial) is required for chickens to produce eggs, and with time change coming soon, coops will require electrical lighting, as well as heat.
- Chickens need fresh food and water daily.
- Eggs need to be collected daily.
- Chickens need to be counted daily, to make sure they made it through the night.
- Open Range Chickens: If allowed and wanted, allowing chickens to roam your backyard can keep the chickens happy and a chance for exercise: (a slight discussion on if chickens really need exercise.)
 - Chickens do have wings and can fly. Clipping their wings with scissors will prevent their flying.
 - Chickens do like to hop onto fences, trash cans and possibly will possibly get out of the yard. Chickens are “home bodies” and will come back home (if they remember how to re-hop the fence).
 - Open range chickens will eat other things besides the grain fed to them. They are garbage disposals eating table scraps, bugs and other “things” they may find in the yard.

COOPS and FEED

Coops need to be a predator proof, wild life, such as raccoons can chew through wire and even pick at the locks; skunks will dig underneath to get into the coops, there are also foxes, coyotes, hawks, dogs and feral cats that will get into the coops. Coops can cost approximately \$800. (Methodist Camp Ground's coop is galvanized.) A good practice is to look at the perimeter of the coop burying it down into the ground about 12 inches and/or doing a foundation base outward 18 inches. Animals haven't figured to go outwards, yet!

Before purchasing a chicken coop, research is required to find the right size and style to fit your backyard. Coops come in many styles and sizes. (A book available at the meeting shows many types of chicken coops.)

Chickens love to scratch and peck around their coops (or yard). The quality of eggs produced by hens depends largely on what they eat.

ED Fuhrmann– CHICAGO LAND URBAN CHICKEN KEEPERS

Ed comes from a family that kept chickens. He knows about the care and feeding, expense and pleasure of having chickens. Ed was helpful in changing the ordinance in the city of Round Lake to approve and allow chicken coops in resident's backyards. Ed explains that the challenge is changing the mindset of a city's opposition. Cities need to understand that a new generation is coming up that is more protective of the environment; such as growing their own food and walking instead of driving. The question to ask city is if “this is working everywhere else, why wouldn't it work for Des Plaines?” Is there support for chicken coops across communities? Yes, there is a lot of support. Opposition? Nothing negative. If you have an interest or an opinion on chicken coops, send to your alderman.

How would the city determine to allow chicken coops? City could do trial periods; a lottery allowing a certain number of chicken coops or placing a cap on how many houses will be allowed. These limitations could cause disappointment among those citizens that want coops ... how would you decide which household has a coop or not?

Many of the challenges will be with the council and there will be people for and against the ordinance allowing chicken coops. Could allowing chicken coops bring up other interests such as having Homing Pigeons? Could and it would have to be brought up in a discussion.

Chicken Coop discussion is not on Monday's (October 19) Council Meeting Agenda. Dee will be discussing the expansion of the 4H Program at Methodist Campground to include other farm animals. The Chicken Coop issue is for a future Council Agenda. For the change of ordinance in allowing chicken coops will require at least 3 councilmen to agree to it being on the agenda.

Both Dee and Ed agree that chickens is rewarding and enjoyable. And strongly advise researching first and sure you want to take on the responsibility of chicken tending. Feel free to contact Dee Hilbert or Ed Fuhrmann with any questions regarding tending chickens through the internet.

NEXT MEETING

November 11, 2015

Submitted by Ruth Betscheider, volunteer

TO CONTACT DENISE

- Phone Number: 847.514.6318. Please call Denise at this number with issues, questions and concerns.
 - Email: denise@3rdward.org
- Facebook is set up for the 3rd Ward. Search DP3 in Facebook.
 - Twitter's hash tag is @Denise Rodd
 - Web Site: www.3rdward.org