

Date: June 26, 2012
To: Members of the Environmental Committee
From: ^{LR} Larry Rich, Sustainability Coordinator, Office of Sustainability
Subject: Proposed Policy Changes Regarding the Keeping of Chickens, Goats and Bees

DISCUSSION

On March 13, 2012, the City Council's Environmental Committee directed staff to develop proposed changes to the City's existing rules (contained in Title 6 of the Municipal Code) governing the keeping of chickens, goats and bees and to seek public input on the proposals. The Office of Sustainability drafted a set of general proposals after extensive research on the policies of other large cities in California and beyond. Community meetings were held on Monday, June 11, 2012 at the Long Beach Community Action Partnership at 3012 Long Beach Blvd., and on Thursday, June 14, 2012 at the Whaley Park Community Center at 5620 E. Atherton Street. At these meetings, a one-page handout detailing Long Beach's current rules and proposed changes was distributed and discussed (Attachment A). The proposals mainly address the required minimum distance from the area that the animals are being kept (coops, enclosures or hives) and a neighboring dwelling, with all of the proposals involving a reduction of that distance.

The two meetings were attended by a total of approximately 70 residents, a majority of whom identified themselves as supporting changes that would be more permissive to the keeping of chickens, goats and bees. A summary of comments and concerns from both meetings is attached (Attachment B). By the end of the first meeting, a general sentiment was expressed that the proposed changes should be supported as written as a means of moving this issue forward without delay. The second meeting was similar, but tempered by expressions for the need to balance animal welfare and humane treatment concerns with the benefits of food production.

The Office of Sustainability was also contacted by telephone by a resident who was not able to attend either community meeting in person. The resident expressed opposition to allowing beekeeping in the City under any circumstance, out of concern for those with bee-sting allergies. This resident also felt that chickens and goats were not appropriate on properties less than one-half acre in size.

Since the public meetings were held, discussions with the Health and Human Services Department and further analysis of the rules of other Southern California cities is leading staff to recommend reducing the number of bee hives allowed in the proposals from a maximum of five to a maximum of two hives. In addition, if the Environmental Committee decides to make a recommendation to the City Council on this item, staff would further develop the proposals to include

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minimum standards for the size of the animal coops and enclosures with animal welfare concerns in mind.

TIMING CONSIDERATIONS

Committee action is requested on June 26, 2012 in order to forward this item to the City Council in a timely manner.


FISCAL IMPACT

There is no immediate fiscal impact associated with this item. If a new ordinance is adopted it could generate some new permit and license fees by Animal Care Services, as well as new calls for service and enforcement cases.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE COMMITTEE:

Provide staff with direction on the preferred elements of the proposed changes to Title 6 and forward those recommendations to the City Council for its consideration.

APPROVED:



PATRICK H. WEST
CITY MANAGER

Attachments

A – Policy Matrix for current and proposed rules on chickens, goats and bees

B – Summary of Public Input from meetings of 6/11 and 6/14/12

City of Long Beach

**Current and proposed policies on the keeping of backyard chickens, goats and bees
For Public Discussion at Community Meetings on 6/11/12 and 6/14/12**

	Current	Proposed
Chickens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 20 may be kept at least 50 feet from 1 and 2 family residences or 100 feet from multi-family (3+) residences or hotels 1 chicken may be kept as pet at least 20 feet from any dwelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 4 may be kept without required distance from neighboring residence 5 to 10 may be kept at least 25 feet from neighboring residence 11 to 20 may be kept at least 50 feet from neighboring residence 5 or more must obtain one-time permit from Animal Care Services
Goats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No more than 1 may be kept at least 100 feet from neighboring residences May not be kept south of Anaheim Street 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 female pygmy goats (only) may be kept without required distance from neighboring residences Must be licensed annually by Animal Care Services Milk products produced are for personal consumption only
Bees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hives must be kept at least 100 feet from neighboring residences and public ways (streets and alleys). Must be kept 10 feet above ground 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 5 hives may be kept at least 5 feet from property line If a hive is less than 15 feet from a property line, a flyway barrier of at least 6 feet high must be maintained around the hive Hives must be registered with Los Angeles County Department of Agriculture

Questions or Comments? Contact Larry Rich, Sustainability Coordinator, 562-570-5839 or larry.rich@longbeach.gov

Urban Agriculture Public Meeting Notes (June 11 & 14, 2012)

Summary of questions, comments, and concerns from public feedback

The Office of Sustainability conducted two public meetings, held on June 11, 2012 and June 14, 2012, to address concerns and questions regarding updating the City's policies on chickens, goats, and bees in residential areas. The meeting outlined the current rules and introduced the proposed changes to the policies. At the first meeting, there were approximately 25 residents in attendance, with no member of the audience opposed to making changes to the rules. The second meeting had approximately 45 residents in attendance, with several differing opinions and additional questions raised regarding the proposed changes. Overall, most attendees supported a more permissive update, but a few concerns arose over the issue of animal welfare. Listed below are reoccurring questions and concerns raised by attendees at the meetings in regards to chickens, goats, bees, and overall questions about how these changes will affect Long Beach residents.

CHICKEN Concerns/Questions

- The current rules address fowl in general. Residents raised the issue of whether the new proposed policy changes address chickens only, or will restrictions on other types of fowl be included? Would including ducks and quail be possible?
- The proposed policy would allow four chickens to be kept without distance or permit requirements. A number of attendees would rather have this number be six.
- The proposed policy states that to keep five or more chickens, a one-time permit must be obtained. Concern was expressed that this fee not be too high. Most felt a nominal fee of \$25 was fair.
- How will baby chicks be accounted for versus adults? Will there be a grace period associated with numbers of chicks & hens kept?
- Questions were asked in regards to clarity in the rules addressing coop size requirements; would there be any and what it would look like?
- Comments about the current rules putting lower income areas at a disadvantage.
- Concern about chickens attracting coyotes into neighborhoods.

GOAT Concerns/Questions

- Comments regarding the weaning period for pregnant & kid goats. There was a discussion regarding residents being allowed to keep young up to four months old without a license (analogous to dogs/cats). Question as to whether this could be increased to six months.
- Questions were addressed regarding what to do with additional goats and selling them.
- Residents would like to see an allowance for the keeping of neutered male goats as pets.
- Residents suggested the number of proposed goat allowance to increase up to three goats, for a minimum of two and maximum three.

BEES Concerns/Questions

- There were questions regarding the size of hives. Would there be a size restriction identified in the proposals?
- A question was brought up about selling honey. Another resident answered that, in order to sell honey (currently), the beekeeper needs to be registered as well as certified with the Los Angeles County Department of Agriculture.

Overall Questions and Concerns

- Residents addressed the importance of public education at both meetings. There were questions about the City providing workshops, handouts and training on animal care for chickens/goats/bees.
- There were concerns raised about the wellness of these animals.
 - a. What would happen to abandoned animals?
 - b. Would the City's animal shelter be able to accommodate chickens & goats?
- Will there be a distinction of farm lots vs. residential lots, and will the same restrictions still apply?
- General concerns were mentioned about ambiguity in the Ordinance update, leaving room for 'too much' interpretation.
- Concerns were raised about Animal Care oversight and upholding complaints and nuisance charges.
 - a. What will the penalties be? Initiated by a complaint. (Warnings vs. fines)
 - b. Would there be something outlined in the new Ordinance safeguarding residents to allow for keeping the animals?