

City of Spring Lake Park Staff Report



Agenda Date		Status		
October 5, 2026		Work Session Discussion		
Requestor		Agenda Section		
Moran		Discussion		
Agenda Item:				
Backyard Chickens Policy Direction				
Executive Summary				
Councilmember Moran requested a work session discussion on whether the City should allow residents to keep a limited number of backyard hens. Neighboring cities use several models, ranging from simple registration to annual licensing, inspections, neighbor approval, and public hearings. Staff seeks direction on whether to prepare an ordinance and, if so, the policy choices that should guide the draft. No ordinance language is presented for approval at this stage.				
Background				
Councilmember Moran requested a discussion be held at a work session on whether the City should allow residents to keep a limited number of backyard hens.				
The City Council last discussed allowing backyard chickens in 2022. At that time, the Council did not express interest in proceeding with an ordinance. Councilmember Moran's request asks the Council to revisit that policy decision.				
The neighboring cities reviewed allow backyard chickens under varying standards. Their approaches range from simple notification to annual licensing, inspections, neighbor approval, or an initial public hearing. The following table summarizes those approaches.				
City	Allowed	Bird limit	Approval	Selected standards
Blaine	Yes	Up to 6 hens; no roosters	One-time registration/permit; \$65 shown	Single-family districts; rear yard; 5 ft from lot lines; 30 ft from adjacent living space; no on-site processing
Fridley	Yes	Up to 6 chickens/ducks; no roosters or loud-clucking hens	\$100 initial; \$25 annual renewal; inspection and education	R-1 only; rear yard; 10 ft from lot lines; 30 ft from neighboring structures; coop/run up to 120 sq. ft.

Columbia Heights	Yes	No chicken-specific numerical standards identified	No chicken-specific program identified	Chickens have been handled under general nuisance provisions rather than a detailed backyard-flock program
Coon Rapids	Yes	Up to 6 total chickens, ducks, pigeons, doves, or quail	\$130 permit, site plan, pre- and post-construction inspections	Owner/HOA consent when applicable; enclosure and nuisance standards; no roosters under city materials
Circle Pines	Yes	Up to 4 hens; no roosters	\$75 permit; neighbor approval for lots under 15,000 sq. ft.	Minimum 10,000-sq.-ft. single-family lot; rear yard; 15 ft from lot lines; 25 ft from dwellings; no outdoor butchering
Lexington	Yes	Up to 4 hens; no roosters	\$75 permit; neighbor approval required on lots under 15,000 sq. ft.	Minimum 10,000-sq.-ft. owner-occupied/owned parcel; ordinance establishes coop, sanitation, and setback controls
Mounds View	Yes	Up to 12 chickens and/or ducks	\$100 initial/\$30 renewal; Council public hearing initially	R-1 only; site plan and coop specifications; annual license; nuisance-based denial or revocation
New Brighton	Yes	Up to 6 chickens; no roosters	Notification/registration; no license	Rear yard; minimum 3 sq. ft. per bird; 5 ft from lot lines and generally 25 ft from nearby residences; no outdoor butchering; bees also allowed by notification

Backyard chickens can provide residents with a local source of eggs and offer educational and recreational benefits. They can also create concerns involving noise, odor, waste, rodents, predators, animal welfare, neighborhood compatibility, and additional permitting and enforcement responsibilities. Other forms of urban agriculture, such as beekeeping, may offer similar benefits but raise different operational and neighborhood considerations.

Before staff takes any action on this request, the City Council should provide direction on the following policy questions:

1. Should the City allow backyard chickens on single-family residential properties?
2. If allowed, should the City use a simple registration process or require a permit or annual license?
3. Should staff prepare reasonable standards addressing the number of hens, prohibition of roosters, coop location, sanitation, animal care, and nuisances?
4. Should eligibility be limited based on zoning district, lot size, property ownership, or neighboring-property considerations?
5. Should staff also explore beekeeping or any other forms of urban agriculture?

Board/Commission Review

No board or commission review is required at this stage. If the City Council directs staff to prepare an ordinance, the draft may be referred to the Planning Commission if it includes amendments to the City's zoning regulations. An ordinance limited to animal licensing, permitting, and nuisance standards could be considered directly by the City Council.

Financial Impact

If the City Council directs staff to prepare an ordinance, the City would incur staff and City Attorney time for ordinance development and implementation. A permit or registration fee could offset some administrative and inspection costs; however, fee revenue would likely be limited and may not fully cover ongoing enforcement costs.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the City Council discuss the policy questions outlined in this report and provide direction on whether staff should prepare an ordinance allowing backyard chickens and whether the ordinance review should include beekeeping or other forms of urban agriculture. If the Council does not have sufficient interest in changing the City's current policy, no further staff action is recommended.

Attachments

1. Councilmember Moran's request regarding backyard chickens