

Chicken-raising plan isn't ruffling feathers

Written by MARK JAEGER
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Trustees show support for allowing fowl during public hearing; final ordinance still needs to be drafted

Village of Fredonia officials were in no position to take action last week, but all indications are that trustees are leaning toward approving a permit process that will allow the raising of chickens in the village.

The Village Board held a public hearing on the concept last week, but no ordinance has been drafted yet.

After fielding a handful of questions on how the village would regulate the raising of chickens in residential areas, trustees promised that another hearing would be held when the wording is finalized on a proposed ordinance.

The hearing was requested by trustees after 12-year-old Trevor Krause approached the village seeking permission to raise 10 egg-laying chickens at his home in the Oakwood Forest subdivision as an educational project over the summer.

Krause laid out a compelling case for his request, noting that even urban areas such as Milwaukee and Madison are starting to allow chickens. He suggested a conditional-use permit be required, so that the village could keep track of problems if they arise.

The Plan Commission recommended not allowing chickens, but trustees felt the proposal had merit and called for the hearing.

The youth's father, Paul Krause, said the negative reaction the proposal has drawn from some raises a question about perception and reality.

"Have we become so 'civilized' that we can't allow chickens in our village? You can come up with a whole lot of justifications why you don't want chickens, but I can't see the problem it would create," Paul Krause said.

Only five village residents attended the hearing, most voicing reservations about allowing chickens.

One of the residents said the village is no place to allow livestock.

Trustees deflected similar comments, along with the suggestion of how allowing chickens could open the door for raising other farm animals in the village.

"The only door we would be opening is the chicken door," said Trustee Mark Edbauer Sr.

Trustee Don Dohrwardt said he intends to draw up a draft ordinance that would spell out the restrictions on raising chickens.

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A \$25 permit fee is being considered, along with restrictions on the age of the birds and the characteristic of the coops.

"I didn't want to go through the effort of creating a full-blown ordinance if it wasn't going to fly — no pun intended," Dohrwardt said.

"The way I look at government, it is our job to be responsive to our bosses — who are the taxpayers. None of us is really pushing this. I don't care if people raise chickens, but I care that people in the village have the choice to raise them if they want to."

Several trustees were critical of the suggestion that conditional-use permits only be issued if all neighbors approve, as was proposed by Dohrwardt.

Trustee Scott Ehaney said such extreme measures shouldn't be necessary.

"If the City of Milwaukee can make it work, a rural village like Fredonia should be able to make it work," Ehaney said.