

Brevard loosens rules on backyard chickens

7:03 AM, Dec 7, 2012 | [3 Comments](#)

County commissioners decided Thursday night to loosen restrictions on the raising of chickens for their eggs in residential neighborhoods.

Written by

Dave Berman

FLORIDA TODAY

County commissioners decided Thursday night to loosen restrictions on the raising of chickens for their eggs in residential neighborhoods.

They voted 4-1 in favor of an ordinance to allow homeowners to own up to four chickens per half-acre of residentially zoned single-family property in unincorporated areas of the county.

Commissioner Chuck Nelson voted no, maintaining that it was a bad idea, and would result in disputes between neighbors. He said the current rule allowing one chicken per household in residential areas is fine.

“I feel my community doesn’t want to see the change we’ve talked about,” Nelson said.

But other commissioners decided that the change was good, although they modified the proposal put forth by county Planning and Development Department staff to exclude pigeons, ducks and other fowl.

Commissioner Robin Fisher said he drew the line at chickens.

“We’re not opening this up to the rest of the fowl world,” Fisher said, because, with the other fowl included, “all of a sudden, right now, we’re creating a mini-farm.”

Under the rules the commission approved, the chickens must be maintained in a coop or similar housing; must be for personal, non-commercial use of the property occupant; and breeding or slaughtering of the chickens is prohibited.

Seven speakers addressed the commission, including Margaret Goudelock and Toby Napier, a west Cocoa couple, who first proposed liberalizing the chicken rules to the commission in April.

“I’m looking forward to Christmas with chickens this year,” Goudelock said.

But John Schantzen, president of the North Merritt Island Homeowners Association, said he opposed the change. He said, where there are chickens, there will be predators like coyotes, hawks, raccoons and snakes.

Port St. John resident Kevin Sullivan also spoke in opposition, saying chickens would negatively affect property values in residential areas, and should be limited to land zoned for agricultural use.

Commission Chairman Andy Anderson asked whether fellow commissioners wanted to put a cap on the number of chickens allowed. But the three other commissioners who supported the new rule felt comfortable with four chickens per half-acre, with no maximum.

The new ordinance does not affect properties within Brevard’s cities and towns, some of which have their own rules. Nor does it override stricter rules in deed-restricted subdivisions.

Contact Berman at 321-242-3649 321-242-3649 or dberman@floridatoday.com. Follow him on Twitter @ByDaveBerman

