

**Village of Shorewood  
Community and Business Relations Committee  
November 6, 2023**

**Call to Order:** Chairperson Tr. Couto called the virtual meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

**Members Present:** Tr. Couto, Tr. Arndorfer, and Tr. Stokebrand (joined within the opening presentation)

**Members Excused:** None

**Others present:** Planning & Development Director Griepentrog

**1. Further discussion of a possible ordinance change to allow the keeping of chickens**

Discussion Points

- Director Griepentrog provided an overview of his memo via a brief presentation.
  - The presentation included similar information that was shared on September 18<sup>th</sup>, as well as follow-up information related to the results of the community survey.
  - He noted that 522 survey responses were received and that the responses for people who did not want the Village to pursue an ordinance change were roughly half and that the other half was either in favor of the change or was interested depending on the proposed regulations.
  - He listed the concerns that residents shared and noted that noise, odor, rodents, predators, permitting/enforceability, and the treatment of chickens were the top submissions.
  - He provided input from neighboring municipalities and noted that a staff member in Milwaukee stated that he had initial concerns, but that none of them have been found. He also noted that he could not recall an instance of having to revoke a permit. Wauwatosa shared that they did not have any problems with noise and credited the requirement for neighbor consent. They noted that rats were more common with dog waste. The North Shore Health Department stated that they've only received one complaint from a resident in River Hills regarding roaming chickens.
  - He summarized that next steps could involve a request for more information, direction to draft an ordinance or a recommendation that the Village not pursue a change to its ordinance.
- Tr. Arndorfer questioned how concerns about Shorewood being too dense or that yards were too small were summarized, and Director Griepentrog noted that 78 people shared that issue, but that they weren't listed as a concern because they couldn't be regulated.
- Chair Couto opened the discussion up to public comment at 7:09 pm.
  - Ellen Eckman, 2500 E Beverly Rd, stated that she was the Chair of the committee that discussed this request back in 2009. She noted that similar concerns were raised and that after a robust conversation the idea never progressed out of committee. She stated that the family that originated the request eventually moved to a more rural area. She noted that the committee discussed how many feet the hen house would have to be from neighbors and did not believe that most properties in Shorewood would qualify, except those along Lake Dr. She stated that no concerns were raised about rats, but that attracting predators were mentioned.
  - Cate Cooper, 3922 N Maryland Ave, stated that she was in favor of Shorewood allowing chickens. She noted that she lived in Fox Point when they were discussing allowing them. She said that she was not sure that she wanted chickens and wanted to make the point that the village would not necessarily be overrun by people who would actually keep them. She stated that she had a small yard and would want chickens to have more space, but thought the idea was great to pursue.
  - Alexa Safer, 4022 N Larkin St, stated that she was in favor of allowing chickens, hens not roosters. She noted that she had a fully fenced-in, double lot backyard that she thought would be perfect for keeping chickens. She noted that she was a professional gardener, and that nature was her passion. She stated that chickens would not only provide eggs but a wonderful learning opportunity for her entire family and help her composting practice. She noted that many other communities, including Milwaukee, allow chickens and have similarly sized yards. She noted that the survey showed an even split of those in favor or opposed, but that the concerns voices from those opposed could be addressed through proper regulation, including proximity or yard-size requirements. She stated that

rodents could be kept away if the chicken feed was stored properly. She believed many concerns may have come from people who were not familiar with hens and noted that they don't make as much noise as dogs. She also stated that neighboring property owner notification could be required so that concerns could be heard before deciding whether to issue the permit. She closed by saying that she supported the right of residents to produce their own food and would personally love to have that experience.

- Barbara Kiely Miller, 4051 N Downer Ave, stated that she was against the keeping of chickens in Shorewood. She noted that Shorewood is the densest community in the state and believed that would be an issue. She stated that her husband has run into loose chickens on N Downer Ave just south of E Capitol Dr so that even with the best of intentions chickens can escape. She noted that they would otherwise be confined to a small space which may not be the healthiest for them. She believed that neighbor notification set up the potential for conflicts with each other. She noted that allowing bees was different because they took up less space. She agreed with a lot of the concerns that were included in the packet, including noise and cleanliness. She stated that it will take a lot of everyday effort to keep chicken areas clean. She noted that she was familiar with chickens and referenced her cousin in northern Michigan who keeps them free range on her small farm. She did not believe that chickens in Shorewood would have the same quality of life. She stated that chickens should be confined to Costco and Metro Market and agreed with others that very few lots would qualify to have them based on their size. With 50% of survey respondents opposed, she would hate to see the Village move too far forward on this idea.
  - Dan Wycklendt, 2212 E Menlo Blvd, shared his comments through a slide presentation. He noted that he understood there was opposition to this idea within the community, as well as likely within his family. He stated that he wanted chickens and noted that he was unaware that a survey had taken place. He noted that many people who took the survey shared concerns, but also noted that there are no topics in Shorewood that everyone agrees on. He said this idea was not outside of the box and referenced that besides Shorewood only Whitefish Bay and Brown Deer did not allow them in the immediate region. He believed that most concerns that were expressed would not materialize and referenced the neighboring experiences included within Director Griepentrog's presentation. He shared his own personal experience of raising chickens in the city of Milwaukee. He noted that his neighbors liked that he kept chickens and said that his chickens picked out the bugs in people's gardens. He said that chickens were not a nuisance and looked like rabbits. He noted that he lived on a small lot in a dense block and proximity requirements were not an issue. He said that a typical Milwaukee lot was 3,600 sq. ft. whereas a typical Shorewood lot was 4,800 sq. ft. With respect to the humane treatment of chickens he displayed a photo of the typical environment where eggs are produced that showed chickens stacked on top of each other. Next, he displayed a photo of a backyard chicken coop and said that it provided plenty of space. He acknowledged that odor and waste can be issues, but those issues are preventable by regular cleaning. He noted that dog waste was worse because it was uncontrolled all over people's yards, as opposed to be contained within a coop. He noted that birdfeeders attract pests and rodents and those are allowed. He acknowledged that predators do exist and that they do attack other animals, but that chickens are housed within a closed coop at night. He also said that if a predator got one of his chickens he would be upset, but that the attachment to a chicken isn't necessarily the same as a family dog. He believed that the Village could enforce an ordinance, if adopted. He ended by stating that chickens are not about producing cheaper eggs, but that they produce happiness. He believed that allowing chickens would be a great addition to Shorewood.
  - Joanne Riordan, 4042 N Richland Ct, stated that she recently moved to Shorewood from Seattle and has friends in Glendale who have chickens and was surprised to learn that Shorewood did not allow them. She noted that Seattle, which allows the keeping of chickens, was also densely populated and shared similar values to locally source food. She said that she lived in a neighborhood with similarly sized lots as Shorewood and had no issues with neighborhood chickens within her five years of living there. She stated that she was in favor of allowing chickens in Shorewood.
- Chair Couto closed public comment at 7:29 pm.
  - Tr. Arndorfer stated that he would like to move the discussion to the full Village Board.

- Tr. Stokebrand noted that she was happy with the turnout at tonight's meeting and all the responses to the survey. She stated that without a greater count of people wanting to allow chickens, she was inclined to not take this discussion out of committee since the survey leaned towards people being more opposed. She did not believe that there were enough people who felt strongly about the idea. She did not believe that just because other communities allowed it that Shorewood should do the same. She said that she sees too many people being opposed to the idea and shared personal concerns. She noted that she grew up on a farm and wondered about the welfare of the chickens in small backyards. She also had concerns about people raising chickens as pets.
- Tr. Arndorfer stated that there was a narrow, but clear majority of survey respondents who were in favor of considering or approving the idea. He also pointed out that we had not seen issues from other communities where this had been adopted.
- Chair Couto stated that he personally did not want chickens in Shorewood. He did not believe that Shorewood's lot sizes were conducive of that many residents would get them. He also had serious concerns about the neighbor consent aspect of it. However, he wanted staff to draft an ordinance that would allow the keeping of chickens so that the committee could vote yes or no on it. At this moment, he said that he was inclined to send it to the full Board for consideration even though he was personally against it. He believed the numbers were close enough to continue the discussion and did not want to stand in the way of that. He asked staff to utilize Milwaukee and Wauwatosa's ordinances as guides to draft a local ordinance for presentation at the December 4<sup>th</sup> meeting.
  - Tr. Stokebrand and Tr. Arndorfer agreed.

#### Action

- No action was taken.

#### Follow Up-Items

- Director Griepentrog will draft and present an ordinance at the December 4<sup>th</sup> meeting for consideration by the committee as to whether or not it should be advanced for consideration by the Village Board.

**Motion to adjourn.** Tr. Stokebrand moved to adjourn; seconded by Tr. Arndorfer. Motion carried at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bart Griepentrog, AICP  
Planning & Development Director