

MINUTES BOOKTOWN OF COEYMANS
September 10, 2020 –Public Hearing – 6:30pm**

A Public Hearing was held Thursday, September 10th, 2020 at 6:30pm at Town Hall, 18 Russell Avenue, Ravena, New York.

PRESENT: George D. McHugh, Supervisor
Daniel D. Baker, Councilman
Kenneth C. Burns, Councilman
Zachary S. Collins, Councilman
Brandon L. LeFevre, Councilman

ALSO PRESENT: Cindy L. Rowzee, Town Clerk

Supervisor McHugh opened the meeting and led the Pledge of Allegiance. He stated that all Town Board members were present.

Supervisor McHugh stated that this was a public hearing on the Proposed Local Law – Livestock/Chickens in the Hamlet. He stated that this was prohibiting farm animals in the hamlet and limiting the number of chickens in the hamlet of Coeymans only. The Town Clerk then read the notice.

**NOTICE OF
CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARING
ON PROPOSED LOCAL LAW**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that the Town Board of the Town of Coeymans will continue a Public Hearing on September 10, 2020 at 6:30pm at Town Hall, 18 Russell Avenue, Ravena, NY on a proposed law “Livestock/Chickens in the Hamlet.” The purpose of this proposed law is to regulate the conditions for the keeping of farm animals or fowl so as to protect the residents of the Town of Coeymans from nuisance and to maintain compatibility with suburban life.

The proposed local law is available for public inspection at the Town Clerk’s office at 18 Russell Avenue, Ravena, NY, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday and on the Town website.

At the above date, time and place all interested persons are welcome to attend and will be heard. Due to limited space the Town Board encourages you to submit your comments on this matter beforehand by submitting a letter, email or telephone call to the Town Clerk’s Office at townclerk@coeymans.org or 518-756-6006, Ext. 3 until 4:00pm the date of the meeting.

Supervisor McHugh stated that the Town had received several comments in writing. He then opened the floor for public comment.

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Public Comment

Ms. Sara Pruiksma of the Hamlet of Coeymans stood and spoke regarding the proposed local law and gave the Town Board a handout she had prepared. Before they bought their house she made sure that she could legally own chickens. She stated that she feels that the volume of complaints received does not necessitate the extent of these laws. She stated that the proposed law is based on the City of Albany law, however the City of Albany has a much higher population density than the Hamlet of Coeymans. She stated that the City of Albany also has a lot of main interstates, Coeymans does not. She pointed out that Albany has multiple colleges and hospitals and they have real reasons to keep the chicken numbers down. The hamlet is a much more rural community and has a post office and a firehouse.

She stated that many neighbors have enjoyed her chickens. She also stated that there are some people who currently own chickens that are reluctant to speak up for fear of being targeted. She asked the Board to not put a one-size-fits-all policy in place and then made some suggestions for changes in the law based on her experience with owning chickens, i.e. supervised free ranging, scratch, size of coops, and the deep litter method. She spoke of the issues with requiring coop permits and feels that requiring them would be a drain on Town resources. As for penalties and seizure of hens, she feels that this should only happen in the case of animal cruelty and that authorities should only be allowed to enter private property with permission. She stated that with the seizure of hens, taking them out of their habitat would compromise their well-being. Ms. Pruiksm encouraged the Board to make changes to the law and offered to work with them on it.

There was discussion with the Town Board regarding some things that she would recommend. She would set the limit of chickens owned at 20. As for livestock, she stated that as long as people have the property and the means they should be able to, as long as their neighbors are okay with it and it is not causing a health issue. Ms. Pruiksm stated that her hens are locked up and only allowed supervised free-ranging so they do not run loose. She spoke about using the feces as fertilizer during the summer and using it during the winter in the “deep litter method” to keep the hens warm. She stated that banning roosters is reasonable. She stated that she would like to see minimal regulation that is not overly specific. She feels that the law as written is overly specific and makes it impossible to enjoy having hens. She recommended encouraging neighbor to neighbor communications and maybe a 3 strikes rule that would need to be fine-tuned.

Ms. Barbara Heinzen of New Baltimore stood and stated that she supports Ms. Pruiksm’s position. She recommended some sort of arbitration between neighbors if they were not able to work it out themselves. She stated that this is not a suburban community but is a little, river town that is on hard times. She feels that if we create an arbitration style communication we would be encouraging communities and encouraging people to talk to each other over the fence. She recommended changing the law to something that is simple and workable and keeps things moving in a neighborly way. She also volunteered to work with the Town Board to come up with something.

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Mr. Kahleed Usmani of the Hamlet of Coeymans stood and spoke about how his family loves their chickens and with the pandemic this has given the children something to do. He stated that they have put a fence up to put the chickens in and are in the process of building a coop. He feels that having any animals at home should not be a problem. He also stated that we have to go with the majority of opinions, not the minority. He stated that people have asked to come in and see his roosters and no one has complained to him. He mentioned that other predators besides chickens could be eating flowers. He stated that the children are enjoying playing with the chickens and it teaches them to take care of the animals.

At this time there were no other comments. The following written statements were instructed to be put in the minutes although there was no time for them to be read at the meeting:

Jo-Ann Segal of the Hamlet of Coeymans:

I understand you feel the need to restrict poultry raising in the Hamlet of Coeymans. This has never been a problem before. If this is a problem at one residence why can't that be worked out on a more personal basis....a mediation perhaps at the Town Hall between the neighbors.

If you need a poultry ordinance for the Hamlet it should be in keeping with what has already worked for quite some time. We've had folks raising chickens and no problem has ever come up, deal with that one problem and make this "law" less restrictive.

Why ban roosters? They've been down here for years. Most of us enjoy hearing them. I have heard constant complaints about the trucks at 5am using their jack brakes or horns as they pass through the Hamlet . They're not banned.

Why limit the size of the enclosure to 150 feet if one's property can support a larger fenced in area? Some people in the Hamlet have larger properties.

Please remove the part that allows persons to inspect the facilities at anytime they choose without notice . Feels a bit heavy handed. Also, are the facilities that have chickens outside of the Hamlet inspected by the Town for cleanliness? If coops are to be inspected at will in the Hamlet all chicken coops outside of the Hamlet should also be inspected at will.

I appreciate you listening to my concerns. Thank you.

Lupe Velez of the Hamlet of Coeymans:

I've been a town resident for the past 12 years, before that owned my own farm up on the hill. Always had horses, goats, chickens and ducks with no problems on 32 acres. Obviously not having those animals here in the village, just a couple house cats now. But I see no issue with people raising chickens if they have enough yard space and tend to them properly. They are gentle birds, easy to keep if you are responsible and do your homework. Plus good for the environment. Organic eggs and they will eat ticks and other pests. Don't know why there is opposition to chickens when there are so many other issues in our town that need to be

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addressed. Fireworks going off almost every night in the warm months. Huge trucks speeding down Main St and River Rd.daily. LaFarge and Carver and other big corporations tearing down local forestland and building more ugly industrial parks. Spreading chemicals into our waters and air. Let the chickens become village members! They'll do more good than harm.

Elizabeth Langlais of the Hamlet of Coeymans:

I am written for regards to the proposed chicken ordinance. I live on New Street and I currently have 10 chickens. They are not loud and I maintain their living area constantly to keep a clean, safe area for my chickens. I do agree with maintained the correct space per chicken. However I believe it is stated that 4 square feet per chicken is suitable. We have .63 acres and the coop and range is sufficiently spaced from the road and houses.

We got chickens because I have myself and 3 guys in my home. Your max amount of 4 chickens is not at all an amount an average family of for can live off of. We only get 4-5 chickens eggs a day because each chicken does not lay one egg per day. If we were knocked down to 4 chickens it would be more like pets and we would still need to buy eggs at the store. I found 10 to be the perfect number for us and our lot size. We get compliments all the time from people walking by how much they enjoy seeing our chickens. They are a part of our neighborhood now.

I understand the need to control the situation as predators may become an issue and well as the cleanliness is the area and noise. Based on my lot size and that I clean the chicken area regular, I am hoping you will see it is possible to do this right. Please consider lot size as a possibility for expanding the amount of chickens. Also I agree with no roosters due to the noise. We've had our chickens for 3 years here and cannot imagine having to decide which to get rid of when we and them have never been a problem.

Thank you!

Ray Reuter of the Hamlet of Coeymans:

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed local law placing numerous restrictions on livestock/chickens in the hamlet. The laws primary focus seems to be chickens/hens as I did not notice any other livestock mentioned. As someone that lives in close proximity to a neighbor that has hens, I find the sound of these animals to be anything but a nuisance. If anything, the sound harkens back to a time when the hamlet was more in touch with its agricultural roots. With the rapid acceleration of industry and ever-increasing truck traffic in the hamlet it is important that we strive to strike a balance and not totally eliminate these ties to our rural heritage. There are far more pressing issues that need to be addressed, most notably the dilapidated and unsafe buildings on Main St and other parts of the landing.

Finally, it seems as if new neighbors to the hamlet have recently added chickens to their yard. Although I have yet had the opportunity to meet them the family appears to be of a different ethnic background then the vast majority of residents. I would hate to think that this might be an underlying reason behind this proposed action. I am going to trust that this is just a coincidence,

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nevertheless it is a really bad optic for a community that needs to embrace anyone that is willing to move in and improve our neighborhood. Chickens or no chickens.

Shawn Thompson of the Hamlet of Coeymans:

I wrote a previous email to Dan Baker who forwarded it to the Rest of the Board when asked for an opinion last month but just to reiterate my family resides in The Hamlet and are against the chickens. Having a rooster outside your window with an infant was a nightmare. The chickens can attract indigenous predators like fox, coyotes, fishers, bears and skunks. That's my main concern. The chickens also escape and I don't want my dog to get one if they end up in my fenced in yard. That has happened Multiple times where they had to be fetched by the owners. They're not bad people but these are real concerns and situations.

Donna Pasquini of the Hamlet of Coeymans:

I am writing to say that I live in the Hamlet of Coeymans. I have two neighbors who have chickens and I do not have a problem with them.

After reading the proposed law regarding chickens in the hamlet, I feel these neighbors will be treated unfairly. I respectfully ask that the Town Board reconsider the manner in which the proposed law is currently written.

Thank you.

Starr Ross of the Hamlet of Coeymans:

In my opinion, this proposed local law needs to be tabled, and saved for the future in case an actual problem of livestock in the Hamlet should occur. Even then, there are portions of this law that are not suitable.

What is wrong with the keeping of a rooster? I have one being kept nearby and I love hearing him.

"All facilities for keeping hens shall be open at all times for inspection by an Animal Control Officer, the Building Department, any Police Department with jurisdiction, or an agent thereof. If an inspection reveals that any provision in this article is violated, the Building Inspector shall give written notice to the keeper of the hens, specifying the violation and requiring that the violation be corrected within 48 hours, or within such reasonable time period as determined by the Building Department or an agent thereof and as set forth in written correspondence. If the violation is not corrected within the period specified, the Building Department or an agent thereof shall issue a fine or may revoke the specified permit in accordance with this article."

This is ridiculous. That because one has hens, any Town agent can enter your property for inspection at any time? We still have property rights if we own hens. This doesn't apply to other pets? Just hens? Dogs? Kids?

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And seriously, the Town will round up the chicks and impound them? Will the Town be building the appropriate hen house to care for these confiscated birds? After all, you are taking them because you feel their environment is not up to code, you'll need a proper place to store them for up to 15 days with out contaminating them.

At this time, I feel the Hamlet does not have an issue with livestock and your energies are better off spent on current issues. This was taken from the City of Albany, we are not comparable, yet.

It would be more advantages to address the feral cats in the Hamlet. They have no borders, most are not healthy. They reproduce like rabbits and leave their worm ridden deposits where ever.

Sincerely,
Starr Ross
long term Hamlet resident and I like hens and fresh eggs :-)

Councilman Burns asked that everyone who has something to say come in to the public hearing, call in or e-mail to make it easier for the Town Board to make a decision.

At this time a motion was made to adjourn the public hearing.

Motion to Adjourn Public Hearing

On motion of Supervisor McHugh, seconded by Councilman Burns, the Public Hearing regarding Proposed Local Law – Livestock/Chickens in the Hamlet was adjourned to September 24th at 6:30pm.

APPROVED – VOTE – AYES 5 – NAYS 0 – ABSENT – SO MOVED

Time – 7:07pm

Respectfully Submitted,



Cindy L. Rowzee, Town Clerk