

MINUTES BOOKTOWN OF COEYMANS
September 24, 2020 –Public Hearing – 6:30pm**

A Public Hearing was held Thursday, September 24th, 2020 at 6:30pm at Town Hall, 18 Russell Avenue, Ravena, New York.

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

ABSENT: Kenneth C. Burns, 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 with the exception of Councilman Burns.

Supervisor McHugh stated that this was a public hearing on the Proposed Local Law – Livestock/Chickens in the Hamlet. He asked the Town Clerk to 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 24, 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.

**By Order of the Town Board
of the Town of Coeymans
Cindy L. Rowzee
Town Clerk**

MINUTES BOOKTOWN OF COEYMANS**
September 24, 2020 –Public Hearing – 6:30pm

Town Clerk Rowzee stated that she had received several statements by e-mail.

Supervisor McHugh opened the floor for public comment.

Public Comment

Sara Pruiksma of the Hamlet of Coeymans stood and thanked the Town Board for keeping the public hearing open. She spoke regarding the proposed local law and discussed some of the sections of it with the Town Board. The following items were discussed:

- Must always be fenced or enclosed - Ms. Pruiksm recommend some leniency with this. There was discussion about loose animals and maintaining control of your chickens. She suggested a law regarding maintaining control of your hens like there is for dogs. She feels that the law is overly complex in a few areas. Supervisor McHugh stated that the law is needed for people who aren't good chicken keepers.
- The section that requires the coop to be 25 ft. from the lot line - It can be closer with permission of the adjoining property owner. Supervisor McHugh stated this was included on advice from Mr. Cashin, the Building Inspector. She stated that it could be difficult to contact owners who lived out of state. She recommended that for existing coops this may not be an issue and suggested that the requirement for permission could be waived.
- Coop size – Ms. Pruiksm stated that she liked the increase on allowing coops to be larger. She did state that 2-3 sq. ft. per is hen is what is recommended and that requiring a minimum of 4 is too much as the hens would get too cold. She stated that this does depend on the breed of the hen.
- Heat Lamps – Councilman Collins asked if something about heat lamps should be included in the law. Ms. Pruiksm stated she has never seen that in a law.
- Scattering of food – Ms. Pruiksm stated that this is a basic need that chickens have and that they will gobble up everything that you put down as long as you don't put down too much. She suggested that this not be prohibited but to maybe add a provision about keeping the area clean. Supervisor McHugh stated that they were concerned that if there was leftover food on the ground it could bring skunks. He stated that he had had a gentleman in his office this week complaining about the skunks and who was also worried about rats.
- Notarized statements for grandfathering larger flocks – Ms. Pruiksm asked for clarification on “adjoining and adjacent” and was told that adjacent would be those properties across the street. She then stated that getting notarized statements from all of those property owners and renters would be a lengthy task. She suggested having to get statements if the coop was within a certain amount of feet because a property at the far end of her property is not close to the coop. The Town Board discussed removing the need to have the statements notarized.
- Penalty and Seizure of Chickens – Ms. Pruiksm recommended changing the penalties to a three strikes and you're out structure. There was discussion about defining what the strikes are and what the repercussions would be.

MINUTES BOOKTOWN OF COEYMANS**
September 24, 2020 –Public Hearing – 6:30pm

- Flock size – Ms. Pruiksmā asked that they increase the existing flock size to 18-20 as that would grandfather everyone in that she is aware of. She also recommended that they raise the number of the maximum on new flocks from 6 to 12.
- Ms. Pruiksmā recommended reducing the number of regulations and stipulations and condensing the law down to about two pages.

Nicole D’Ambrosio, the Town Grant Writer, suggested that the number of chickens allowed should depend on your lot size.

The following comments were received by e-mail:

Rick Touchette of the Hamlet of Coeymans:

Good afternoon. I have lived on Church Street in the hamlet for 27 years. I see no reason to prohibit or limit chickens or other livestock in the hamlet. One of the elements that makes the hamlet such an attractive place to live is diversity, and backyard chickens add to this. There seems to be many in opposition to this proposed law, with very few residents of the hamlet in favor. I urge the Town Board to vote against this proposed local law. Thank you.

Bernice Hopkins of the Hamlet of Coeymans:

I live behind two families with chickens, in the hamlet and you would not know they were there unless you are walking and looking closely at these properties. They have maintained these coops for a few years now and I have never had a issue or complaint with either coop. I didn’t even know they were there for a while, I seen a few walking around the coop and thought how nice it was to see families doing this again and providing Fresh food for their family.

I am not sure why, if people are maintaining their coop and chickens there needs to be a law, wouldn’t a animal control officer work better in cases where there is animal abuse.

I also do not understand why this is a hamlet only rule, or why having chickens gives others the right to come on your property to investigate without permission.

Virginia Bryant:

To the Town Board of Coeymans,
A call for help was put out by a young mother living in the Hamlet. This help was requested in support of stopping the multiple intrusions and restrictions for keeping chickens there.

In general terms, in the midst of various disasters and food shortages that will most likely worsen, it seems inappropriate to say the least to be making life more

MINUTES BOOKTOWN OF COEYMANS**
September 24, 2020 –Public Hearing – 6:30pm

difficult for families that want to live and feed their kids. They got chickens partly because eggs are no longer always available.

A partial list of things that should not happen in a free country.

24/7 access to private property by 'officials' for inspections
This is unreasonably oppressive and unconstitutional

*Limit of 6 hens (no roosters permitted)

WHY restrict hens??????? The roosters, it is understandable. They are noisy, though as a child I found their morning sounds a comfort.

Please grandfather in the law about the number of chickens so that people do not have to forfeit property that actually contributes to sustainable living.

*No free-ranging allowed - even if hens keep to your property

More senseless oppression which is unsustainable. This is how chickens prefer to eat, and it also cuts down on bug and pest issues.

*Annual permits AND inspections

I am pretty sure these kids are already paying property taxes.
When is enough enough?

*Coop and enclosure restrictions, building permits for all coops

More stealing from the people. The most sustainable way to do this sort of building is with recycled materials. I am willing to bet this is not allowed.

*No scattering of food (such as scratch)

This is an excellent way to dispose of kitchen scraps and can be used as part of a sustainable PRIVATE practice of recycling.

*Hens may be seized if violations are found

Who wrote this? I want the name!

My friend considers her chickens pets. Why should she not be able to care for them as she sees fit on her property? This is the sort of unsustainable old paradigm authoritarianism that is ruining lives.

Again, when is enough enough?

These kids own their property and pay taxes. Please leave them alone!

It seems we have oppressive laws for any of us willing to work to take care of our own needs. HOW does this happen in a constitutional republic?????????

I spent a large part of my childhood in my grandparents mini farm in the suburbs where they had chickens. They would not have been able to cope with all these

MINUTES BOOKTOWN OF COEYMANS**
September 24, 2020 –Public Hearing – 6:30pm

demands in addition to the upkeep of their gardens, bees and chickens. These chickens never caused anyone trouble.

It is a symptom of the culture of death to enact so many restrictions on life, which should be simple and peaceful for us all.

Please reconsider the burdens you seek to impose on your citizens.

Beth Langlais of the Hamlet of Coeymans:

I am writing on the pro chicken side of this argument. I have written a letter in the past regarding the number limit for hens in the town of Coeymans. I find the max number of 6 to be unacceptable. I have had chickens on my property which is .63 acres of land. My chickens are not in any way a nuisance to my community and neighbors. In fact, I get compliments all the time from people who walk by our property saying how much they enjoy our chickens. We have PLENTY of room for our 10 chickens and we take extremely good care of them. For our lot size and our family of 4, 10 chickens have been the magic number. We get on average with 10 chickens 5 eggs a day during the months of March-October. In the winter they no longer lay eggs due to the loss of Daylight. So we bulk up and freeze eggs to get through those months. This year especially with produce and market prices increasing we will rely on these eggs for food that is packed with protein and healthy for my family and land. We compost with our chickens and they control our weeds and our bug population. They help control tick outbreaks and mosquito populations too.

I extremely encourage you to look at lot size to determine the max number of chickens one household can have. Our chickens and coop are on our “farming side” of our property. It is not near any other housing structures. It in no way interferes with our surrounding neighbors. We have had some of these chickens for 3 years and we would have to get rid of the older ones if we had to decrease our flock. One being my sons chicken. These are a part of our family. If a constant nuisance I could see being strict about it. Just like dogs barking. We have a neighbor whose dog will bark for hours and it hasn’t been taken away. This should be the same for our chickens. If you begin getting complaints, take action against THAT homeowner, not all the homeowners. Especially owners who are responsible chicken owners.

I understand the need for a limit, but if you were a chicken owner, and you were told that after having chickens for 3 years that your family adores, that now you have to get rid of a part of your family, you would be devastated. Yet again another negative aspect of 2020. Please consider upping the minimum hens by lot size or by a case by case basis. We don’t deserve this.

Thank you!

MINUTES BOOKTOWN OF COEYMANS**
September 24, 2020 –Public Hearing – 6:30pm

Jason Hutchinson of the Hamlet of Coeymans:

I am writing to you today in support of the local agricultural community and oppose the proposed livestock law. This law is overreaching in the amount of authority that is granted to property inspectors.

I understand that there have been some complaints of some people having chickens, but that is strictly a civil matter. To codify this into law is a total waste of time and taxpayer money. The resources could be put to a much better cause than to police how many chickens someone has on their property. I strongly oppose this measure and encourage the town board members to stop wasting taxpayer money on non-issues such as this.

Liz Tricerri and Brian Campoli of the Hamlet of Coeymans:

I am writing on behalf of myself and my boyfriend Brian Campoli. Brian is a full-time resident of Coeymans Landing and I am part time. We have read the proposed livestock law and we are both animal lovers as well as citizens who understand the rights of both residents, their neighbors and pets alike. We have several friends who have free-range chickens on their properties, well cared for animals, who are happy and healthy and lay a good amount of eggs. This is food for humans! We are in a global pandemic, and the necessity of safe and healthy food sources must be protected. We don't believe that "officials" can access private property for inspections 24/7, that's trespassing in our opinion. We understand that chickens must be cared for properly and the town is trying to ensure that, but don't take it to the level of infringement of property rights. Also, we encourage the Board to incorporate a statement that "Pre-existing flocks of chickens will not be subject to the permitting process, nor will they be subject to the regulations on numbers of hens. The keeping of existing roosters will be contingent upon having no noise complaints. The property owner will be prevented from obtaining new roosters or replacing hens to rebuild their flock to more than 12 birds." That's fair!

And by the way, before you go after chickens, why don't you look at how some of the citizens of this hamlet live?!! Where is the zoning for this: an RV parked on the front lawn, disturbing the peace daily with yelling and abuse of their kids, a pool with no fence and a trampoline with no net. And the sheriff's station is right across the street. Please do something about this first! The neighbors are scared and tired of this scene.

Barbara Heinzen of New Baltimore:

I have taken a look at the proposed revisions to the proposed law on livestock and chickens. With respect, I don't think it goes far enough to meeting the objections to the law raised by those who support keeping chickens in the Coeymans Hamlet.

MINUTES BOOKTOWN OF COEYMANS**
September 24, 2020 –Public Hearing – 6:30pm

Before passing this law, I would like to ask the board to set up a sub-committee of board members. These members will be asked to meet with people who are keeping chickens as well as those who object to the chickens. Such a meeting would need to bring everyone together either on Zoom or with a suitable social distance.

To that end, could the Board please publish on its website the exact complaints that have been made so that the law can be written in such a way that those who object to chickens and those who want to keep them can come to a comfortable understanding.

I fear the Board is creating a problem where none exists, rather than negotiating a solution that is satisfactory to both owners and their neighbors. The town does not need heavy-handed law to solve every small dispute. I am sure all of you want to promote good neighborly relations, rather than strife and aggravation.

Yvonne Shackelton of Ravena:

I am a village resident but I know some folks who live in the hamlet and keep chickens and I'm writing in support of them.

While I agree with the stance that there should be some common-sense regulation to keep the chicken population from inconveniencing others, I also feel that it may be a good idea to consider three further possibilities:

1) that people who currently own chickens be granted 'grandfathered' rights to able to keep their flocks intact, even if the number exceeds the current proposed law. This would protect the emotional, practical and financial investments that were made prior to this proposed law.

2) that town law-makers sit down with hen owners to understand best practices for raising hens with the goal of revisiting parts of the law that may be too confining.

3) that the laws have some flexibility to accommodate owners who receive no complaints. Something akin to 'time served for good behavior', perhaps?

Imposing abrupt, limiting and all-encompassing chicken laws seems heavy-handed. It seems to me there is still room for compromises to be made to everyone's satisfaction. I encourage the board to take another listen to and work with the hen owners.

Bruce and Diane Pruiksmas of Athens:

MINUTES BOOKTOWN OF COEYMANS**
September 24, 2020 –Public Hearing – 6:30pm

We are writing in regards to the proposed law regarding keeping livestock in the hamlet of Coeymans. We understand some type of regulation needs to be in effect in case of complaints, but this proposed law seems excessively strict and harsh in a tiny rural community. Some common sense needs to be incorporated into this law.

Our daughter and her husband keep a very well cared for and neat ,tidy coop in Coeymans. They enjoy their chickens as pets, and eggs as a source of food. They have not had any complaints lodged against them and their neighbors express no issues.

Please encourage the Board to incorporate the below statement into their law: "Pre-existing flocks of chickens will not be subject to the permitting process, nor will they be subject to the regulations on the number of hens. The keeping of existing roosters will be contingent upon having no noise complaints. The property owner will be prevented from obtaining new roosters or replacing hens to rebuild their flock to more than 12 birds.

Pre-existing owners of current flocks should be grandfathered in under any previous laws. Thank you!

Mi-Lyn Dolan of the Hamlet of Coeymans sent in several suggested revisions that were shared with the Town Board.

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 Baker, the Public Hearing regarding Proposed Local Law – Livestock/Chickens in the Hamlet was adjourned to October 8th at 6:30pm.

APPROVED – VOTE – AYES 4 – NAYS 0 – ABSENT 1 – SO MOVED

Time – 7:12pm

Respectfully Submitted,



Cindy L. Rowzee, Town Clerk