



**REQUEST:** *Ordinance 25-18*

**SUBMITTED BY:** **Dara Sanders, Development Services Director**  
**Through Alderman Vincent Fuqua**

**DATE:** **August 18, 2025**

**RE:** **Amend Municipal Code Related to Backyard Hens**

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**BACKGROUND:**

In 2014, the Board of Mayor and Aldermen (BOMA) adopted Resolution 14-62 to establish a new policy permitting single-family properties to keep backyard hens. Under the current city policy, single-family properties are permitted to keep a maximum of four hens, regardless of the size of the property. This cap does not account for the significant variation in residential lot sizes across Spring Hill. Many residents with larger lots have expressed interest in maintaining more hens to increase their access to fresh eggs, promote sustainable living, and support local food sources.

The original proposal for this ordinance amendment would have allowed for the number of hens permitted on a single-family property to be calculated based on the square footage of the lot while maintaining the distance requirement of Resolution 14-62. This change allows for a more equitable and practical approach to backyard poultry, especially for homeowners with larger lots, without compromising on standards of care or community impact. Benefits include:

- Scalability and Fairness: Residents with larger properties can responsibly maintain more hens.
- Sustainability: Supports local food production and self-sufficiency.
- Community Interest: Encourages responsible urban farming practices in line with growing public interest.

In response to public concern with the original proposal, the BOMA directed staff to prepare performance standards to accompany the proposal.

**PROPOSAL:**

The proposal has been updated to include the following:

“Backyard hens may be permitted on single-family properties in all other zoning districts subject to the following requirements:

- A. The number of backyard hens permitted:
  1. Four (4) hens for the first 10,000 square feet; and
  2. One (1) additional hen may be permitted for every 5,000 square feet of lot area above 10,000 square feet.



- B. Roosters are prohibited.
- C. Townhome, multi-family and similar attached units are prohibited from keeping hens.
- D. Enclosure definitions and dimensional requirements:
  - 1. A “Coop” is a structure for housing hens that is fully enclosed on all sides (including a roof) to protect from weather and predators and is equipped with adequate ventilation to ensure the health of the animals.
    - a. The minimum coop size shall be 5 square feet per hen.
  - 2. A “Pen” is an enclosed outdoor area attached to or adjacent to a chicken coop, designed to allow hens to move freely while being contained.
    - a. The minimum pen size shall be 10 square feet per hen.
- E. Separation requirements from adjoining properties:
  - 1. Enclosures containing four (4) hens or less shall be constructed or placed no less than 25 feet from the rear and side property lines.
  - 2. Enclosures containing more than four (4) hens shall be constructed or placed no less than 25 feet from any property line plus an additional 5 feet per hen.
  - 3. Enclosures are prohibited in all building setbacks and between the single-family home and the street.
- F. Hens are prohibited from running at large.
- G. Stored feed must be secured in metal containers to prevent mice and other pests.
- H. No slaughtering of the hens is allowed on the subject site.
- I. Properties zoned AG (Agricultural) OR greater than two and one half (2 ½ ) acres in size are exempt from these parameters.
- J. The Development Services Director or designee shall issue a permit only when, in their sound judgment, the keeping of such an animal in a yard or building under the circumstances set forth in the application will not injuriously affect public health.

**DISCUSSION:**

These modifications would allow for a property containing one (1) acre to keep up to 10 hens, require an increased separation of the required chicken coop and pen from all property lines when keeping more than 4 hens, establish prescriptive standards for coops and pens, prohibit coops and pens from being located in building setbacks to minimize impacts to neighboring properties, and grant the Development Services Director the discretion for approval or denial based on public health.