



WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY REPORT

Information ☐	Recommendation ☐	Decision Request ☐	Councillor Activity ☐
--------------------------------------	--	---	--

To: Committee of the Whole

Submitted by: Councillor Bonnie Smith

Date: September 8, 2026

Subject: Request for Planning Staff to Explore Amendments to the Windsor Land Use By-law to Permit Additional Animals for Personal Food Consumption

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Nova Scotia Municipal Government Act Section 219(2) A council may amend a land-use by-law in accordance with policies contained in the municipal planning strategy on a motion of council or on application. Section 220(2) A land-use by-law shall (a) list permitted or prohibited uses for each zone; and (b) include provisions that are authorized pursuant to this Act and that are needed to implement the municipal planning strategy.

RECOMMENDATION or DECISION REQUEST

That Committee of the Whole recommend to Council to direct staff to explore potential amendments to the Windsor Land Use By-law to permit residents to keep a greater number and/or variety of livestock and poultry on residential properties for personal food consumption, and report back to Council with recommendations regarding appropriate animal limits, lot-size requirements, setbacks, containment, animal welfare, sanitation, manure management, noise, odour and other appropriate safeguards.

BACKGROUND

Property ☐	Public Opinion ☐	Environment ☐	Social ☐	Economic ☐	Councillor Activity ☐
--	--	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

I have been approached by a resident who has a small urban farm market in the former Town of Windsor. This resident would like to see the LUB changed to allow him to have a few more

animals for personal food consumption than the current by-law allows. The Windsor Land Use By-law currently contains provisions for Urban Agricultural Uses.

Section 5.44 permits up to four chicken laying hens on properties in Residential zones and the Town Centre zone where the primary use is a single-detached or two-unit dwelling. The By-law also contains specific requirements relating to secure containment, coop and run setbacks, feed storage and cleanliness. Roosters and the slaughtering of animals are currently prohibited.

These provisions were introduced through an amendment to the Windsor Land Use By-law in 2017 to recognize urban agricultural uses.

The existing provisions provide an opportunity to consider whether the regulations continue to reflect the needs and expectations of Windsor residents and the broader community.

DISCUSSION

There is increasing interest among residents in food security, self-sufficiency, household food production and the ability to produce food on their own property.

Allowing residents to keep a reasonable number of animals for personal consumption could provide several potential benefits, including:

- supporting household food security;
- providing residents with greater opportunity to produce their own food;
- supporting self-sufficiency and sustainable living;
- providing opportunities for residents to learn agricultural and animal-care skills;
- maintaining and strengthening Windsor's connection to its agricultural heritage;
- allowing residents to make productive use of appropriately sized residential properties; and
- providing greater flexibility for residents while maintaining appropriate protections for neighbouring properties.

At the same time, Council must recognize that increasing the number or type of animals permitted in residential areas can create potential concerns relating to odour, noise, waste, pests, animal welfare, property maintenance, water quality and impacts on neighbouring properties.

For that reason, it would be appropriate for Planning staff to undertake a detailed review before Council considers any specific amendment.

Conclusion

The existing Windsor Land Use By-law permits a limited form of urban agriculture, including up to four laying hens on qualifying residential properties.

Council has an opportunity to ask Planning staff to examine whether these provisions could be modernized to provide residents with greater opportunity to produce food for their own households.

A staff review would allow Council to consider the potential benefits of increased household food production while ensuring that any changes are appropriately balanced with neighbourhood compatibility, animal welfare, environmental protection and public health.

The review should consider, at a minimum:

1. Types of animals

Determine which animals could reasonably be permitted for personal food production, potentially including:

- laying hens;
- meat chickens;
- ducks;
- geese;
- turkeys;
- rabbits;
- goats;
- pigs;
- sheep; and/or
- other small livestock appropriate for residential properties.

The review should distinguish between smaller animals that may be appropriate for residential lots and larger livestock that may require larger properties or different zoning.

2. Number of animals

Explore whether animal limits should be established based on:

- the type of animal;
- lot area;
- number of dwelling units;
- available outdoor space; and/or
- an appropriate animal-unit system.

A graduated system could allow more animals on larger properties while maintaining lower limits on smaller residential lots.

3. Personal consumption

The regulations should clearly distinguish between animals kept for personal household consumption and a commercial livestock operation.

The intent of any amendment would be to allow small-scale household food production and not to create commercial agricultural operations within established residential neighbourhoods.

4. Setbacks and containment

Consider appropriate minimum setbacks for animal shelters, coops, pens, runs and other structures from:

- property lines;
- neighbouring dwellings;
- streets;
- wells;
- watercourses; and
- other sensitive areas.

Requirements should ensure that animals remain safely contained on the owner's property.

5. Animal welfare

Any proposed regulations should require animals to be provided with appropriate shelter, food, water, fencing and living conditions and should remain subject to applicable provincial legislation and regulations.

6. Manure and waste management

Staff should investigate appropriate requirements for the storage and disposal of manure and animal waste to minimize odour, insects, rodents and potential impacts on neighbouring properties and watercourses.

7. Noise and nuisance

The review should consider reasonable measures to minimize impacts from animal noise, particularly where animals such as roosters or other noisy livestock may be proposed.

8. Slaughtering

Staff should specifically examine whether the current prohibition on slaughtering animals should remain unchanged or whether a carefully regulated provision could be considered for animals raised specifically for personal consumption.

Any recommendation should consider public health, animal welfare, neighbouring property impacts and applicable provincial requirements.

9. Lot size

Planning staff should determine whether increased animal limits should be tied to minimum lot sizes. This could provide greater flexibility for residents with larger properties while protecting residents of smaller urban lots.

10. Other municipal bylaws and legislation

The review should identify any potential interaction with other municipal bylaws and applicable provincial or federal legislation, including requirements related to animal welfare, public health, environmental protection and agricultural activities.

Policy Considerations

The existing Windsor Land Use By-law already recognizes urban agriculture as a legitimate land use through Section 5.44.

The proposed review would therefore build upon an existing municipal framework rather than introducing the concept of urban agriculture for the first time.

The current by-law's stated purpose includes implementing the Municipal Planning Strategy and providing a fair and systematic means of development control.

A review by Planning staff would allow Council to determine whether the existing restrictions remain appropriate and whether a more flexible approach could be developed while continuing to protect neighbouring properties and the broader community.

NEXT STEPS

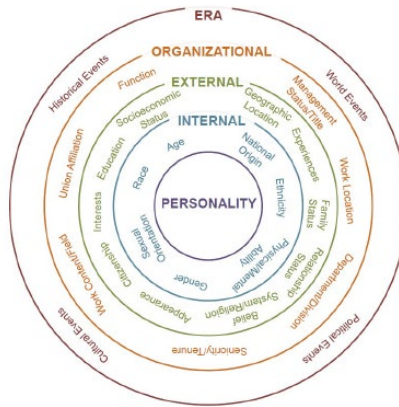
Staff will be asked to report back to council at the November 10, 2026 Committee of the Whole with their findings and recommendations.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no significant immediate financial implications associated with directing Planning staff to undertake the review.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed review may support food security, self-sufficiency, and household food production opportunities for some residents. However, the ability to keep livestock or poultry may vary based on lot size, housing type, and property ownership, meaning not all residents would benefit equally. No significant accessibility, environmental equity, or anti-racism concerns have been identified at this stage.



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Increasing opportunities for small-scale food production may support local food security and community resilience. However, additional livestock and poultry on residential properties could create environmental impacts related to odour, waste management, pests, stormwater runoff, and water quality. Any proposed amendments should include appropriate safeguards to protect neighbouring properties, public health, and the natural environment.

ALTERNATIVES

Council may not approve the motion.
Council may choose a different course of action.

ATTACHMENTS

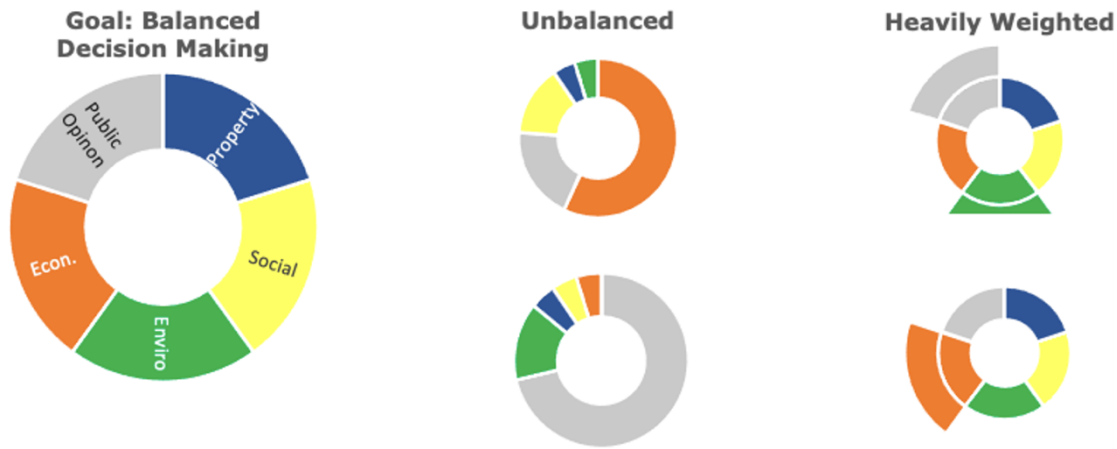
None

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER REVIEW

I encourage Council to discuss this matter as it is an ongoing topic that by-law enforcement, development officers and planning in general responds to on a regular basis. Generally speaking, animals can reflect the benefits as noted in the report as well as create challenges / conflicts between neighbors and households.

Noting that I support the discussion, I would request that Council defer the discussion to the Regional Planning Review Session on September 24th to allow the whole of Council, PAC /HAC, staff and consultants to discuss the topic alongside other proposals and changes associated with land use in the municipality.

Council has been provided with a reference taken from the Meeting and Committee Procedural Policy , Appendix C “Decision Making by Council and Committee of the Whole” as a reminder of the principles highlighted for good decision making.



Report Prepared by: _____
Bonnie Smith, Councillor District 10

Report Reviewed by: _____
Deanna Snair, Municipal Clerk

Report Approved by:  _____
Mark Phillips, Chief Administrative Officer