

RESPONSE TO COUNCILLOR INQUIRY / SUGGESTION

MAYOR THORN

Mayor Thorn provided information that the current Fees, Rates and Charges Bylaw includes a fee increase for urban hens and inquired what the rationale for the increase is, and requested details of what the fee covers.

Estimated Administrative Time to Respond

Under 4 hours (no motion required)

Over 4 hours (motion required) Estimated Hours: n/a

Motion

n/a

Response

The Urban Hen license fee helps offset the cost of administering the program: sending out packages, reviewing and approving applications, inspecting properties, creating/issuing permits, and any follow-up required with hen owners (neighbour complaints, etc.). During the 2015/16 pilot there was no fee to participate in the program. In 2017, the Urban Hen Bylaw was passed and an annual fee of \$30 was established.

In 2022, the Urban Hen Bylaw was amended to adjust the number of hens participants could have from three (3) to four (4), and increased the number of permits that can be issued so more people are able to participate in the program. At that time, the annual permit fee was raised to \$50 to help offset inflationary increases to the costs of administering the program, and since then, there has been no increase.

Why an increase in Urban Hen under the Fees, Rates and Charges bylaw?

The rationale for a fee increase for urban hen permits under the Urban Hen bylaw include factors such as:

1. **Cost Recovery:** Ensure fees charged help with costs associated with administering and regulating urban hen keeping, including inspections, enforcement and education.
2. **Sustainability:** Encouraging responsible urban hen keeping by ensuring that the fees adequately support resources for proper oversight and management of hen-related issues.
3. **Community Support:** Demonstrating that the program is financially sustainable and that those who benefit from urban hen keeping are contributing to its ongoing success.

What the fee covers?

1. Permitting process: Costs associated with processing permit applications and renewals, including staff time and administrative overhead.
2. Inspections: Partial cost recovery for inspections to ensure hen owners are complying with bylaw regulations.
3. Enforcement: Funding for enforcement actions, such as addressing complaints related to noise, odour, or other nuisances caused by urban hens.

Overall, the fee is intended to help cover the costs of regulating and managing urban hen keeping in Okotoks while promoting responsible hen ownership and community wellbeing.

Attachment(s)

n/a

Prepared by:
Vikram Kulkarni
Municipal Enforcement Manager
April 02, 2024