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ELGIN COURIER-NEWS

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# Up to 300 more chickens could call Elgin home

By MIKE DANAHEY  
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Peter Mangan, part of the original group to keep backyard chickens in Elgin, kept this chick under a heat lamp in the basement of his family's home until it was ready to live outside in a backyard coop. (Mike Danahey / The Courier-News)

Up to 300 more chickens eventually could be living legally within Elgin backyards, as the City Council moved along an amendment to an existing ordinance Wednesday night.

By a 9-0 vote, the Council agreed to expand the number of households able to obtain the required licensing for keeping up to four chickens living in coops that must also be permitted and set up under certain parameters in backyards. The council could vote on the matter Sept. 13.

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Council member Tish Powell noted that the trial chicken-keeping program Elgin launched in 2015 was controversial at the time, but, despite not having any pets herself, she supported.

"This is for people who are serious about keeping chickens and for doing it the right way," Powell said.

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Council member Terry Gavin said he had been in favor of having the trial program until he heard from many residents who were against allowing such. But there have been no complaints received by the city about the legally kept fowl and the program has not been a burden on staff.

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"It's worked out well," Gavin said.

Council member Carol Rauschenberger and Gavin agreed that allowing limited chicken-keeping provided people opportunity for "taking control of their own food system," as Rauschenberger put it.

Rauschenberger recalled that the trial grew out of an appeal from 15 residents to the city's Sustainability Commission in 2014.

The program was modified to allow chicks to be kept indoors until big enough to live safely outside in cooped enclosures, and grew from 15 homes to 25 homes for 2016, with a wait list created.

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Elgin Communications Specialist Molly Center, who also serves as the Sustainability Coordinator, told the Council that the wait list stood at eight homes at the end of last year but has grown to 34 during 2017. Responding to a question from Council member Corey Dixon, Center said people have been on the list for as long as 18 months.

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Center said the expansion to 100 households permitted to have chickens allows all those now on the wait list to participate while providing a manageable number of

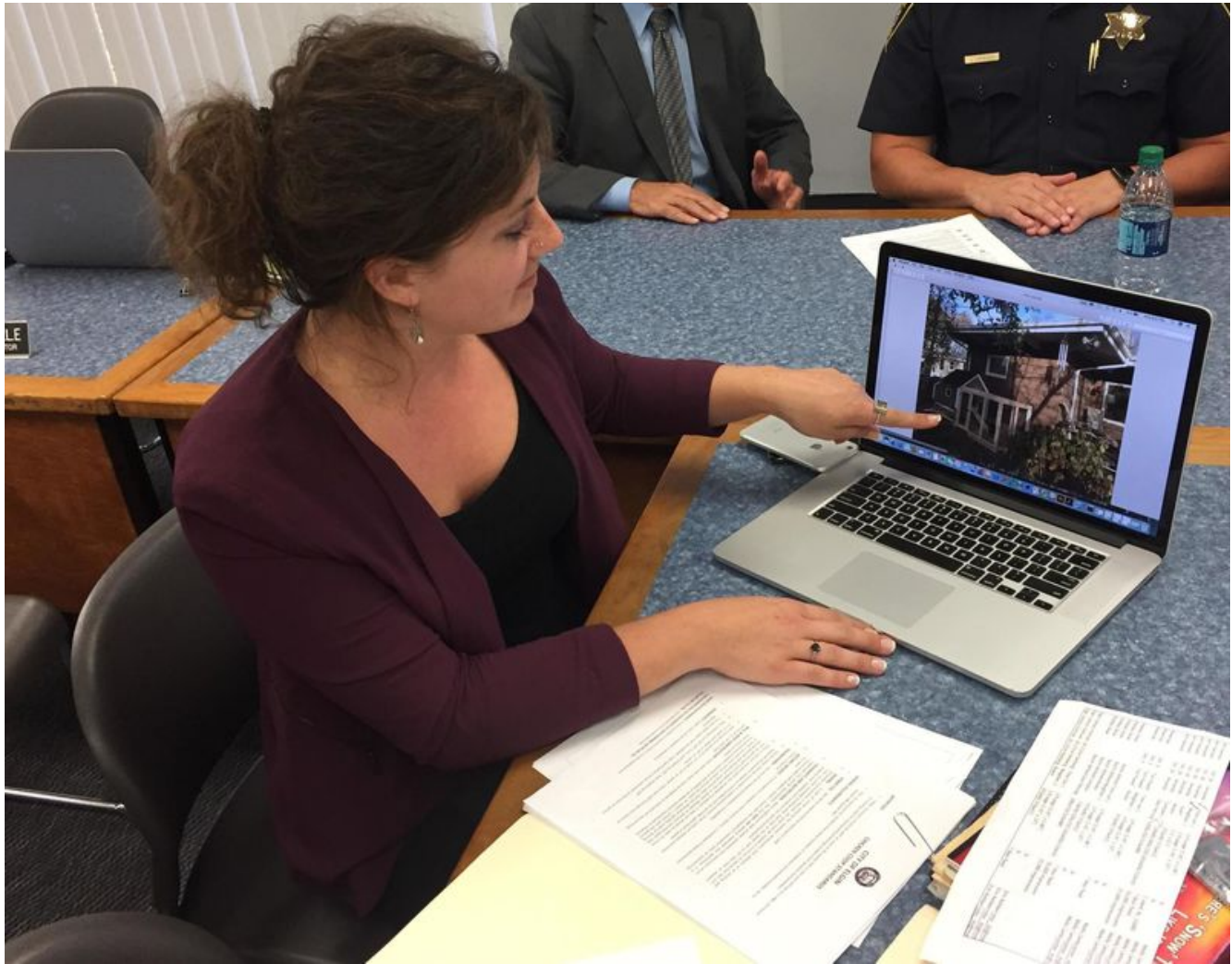
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"This limit prevents the program from expanding too rapidly and allows for more effective enforcement for those households not in the program," according to a memo for the meeting.

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Elgin Communications Specialist and Sustainability Coordinator Molly Center looks over a photo of an Elgin home that has a backyard chicken coop at the Elgin City Council meeting Wednesday night. (Mike Danahey / The Courier-News)

The meeting material also notes that Batavia, Downers Grove, Evanston, Naperville, St. Charles and West Dundee don't limit the number of chicken-keeping permits they issue, while Decatur and Chicago require no permits to build chicken coops.

At least two people at the meeting were happy with the Council's decision.

Audrey Hinchley said she and her family decided to move from Streamwood to Elgin's west side in part because Elgin permits having backyard chickens. Hinchley was at the Wednesday meeting with her 7-year-old daughter, Claire, and saw having backyard chickens as a way to provide eggs as well as a learning experience for her family.

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She asked Center to add her name to the list of the people interested in being among the next Elgin residents to keep the birds.

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