

Council to reconsider hens in city

THELMA GUERRERO-HUSTON Statesman Journal
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The issue of chicken ownership inside Salem city limits has worked its way back onto the city council agenda.

More than two months after pro-chicken activists first argued their case for backyard hens in the city, the council will revisit the topic tonight.

Councilors won't actually be making a decision for or against chickens, though.

They will instead cast a vote on whether to hold a public hearing on the matter next month.

At the June 15 hearing, councilors would vote on whether to initiate a city code change to allow keeping chickens in Salem.

The hearing also will be an opportunity for members of the public to speak for or against a code change.

Except for two opponents who spoke during a March 9 council meeting, the city council has primarily heard from chicken supporters.

"We haven't really created the opportunity for opponents to speak on the topic," said Ward 3 City Councilor Brad Nanke.

If the council votes against the June hearing, the issue would likely be put to rest, unless the council were to make a motion and pass a code change tonight, Nanke said.

The earlier proposal called for residents to be allowed as many as six hens without a city permit. No roosters would be allowed.

Opponents and some city staff have worried about flies attracted by the chickens, odor created by their waste and how city officials would enforce the ordinance.

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LORI CAIN | Statesman Journal
inda and Ron Hays raise six chickens on their property in rural Marion County. The Hays support the effort to loosen the restrictions on having chickens in the city.

Also on tonight's agenda

-Councilors will consider whether to pursue a federal grant funded by stimulus money that would enable the city to buy a fleet of hybrid electric vehicles and develop numerous electric vehicle charging stations.

-Council is expected to approve applying for a grant that would allow Salem Fire Department to purchase portable radios that are narrowband compliant, digital capable, waterproof and increase radio coverage capacity.

-Councilors will consider expanding the parking lot that serves the dog park area at Minto-Brown Island Park by 13,875 square feet.

If you go

Salem City Council meets at 6:30 p.m. in council chambers at Vern Miller Civic Center, 555 Liberty St. SE.