

January 18, 2011

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City of Menasha Common Council

Dear Council members:

This discussion of the "fowl-ordinance" is turning out to be an interesting debate involving a number of issues, including property rights, environmentally sustainable living and our perceptions of "nature" -- not to understate its considerable value as pure entertainment -- and I would be grateful if I might add my two-cents' worth.

My mother didn't want a cat in the house. She knew from common sense, and with complete certainty, that "cats belong in the barn, not in the house." They were, by definition, a "farm animal." So it seems that the definition of "farm animal," which seems completely clear in the mind of whoever is using it, is not necessarily agreed upon, even when found in a dictionary. I believe that many of the arguments to disallow hens could just as readily be made to prohibit cats in the city. They are, after all, "farm animals." My Mom said so.

Neighborhood cats are not supposed to run loose and stalk my birdfeeders. But, as long as their owners follow the rules, the cats get to live in my neighborhood.

Neighborhood dogs are not supposed to run loose, howl for more than a few minutes on the rarest of occasions, or leave steamy treats on the sidewalk in front of my house (see: "*wishful thinking*"). But, as long as their owners follow the rules, the dogs get to live in my neighborhood.

I remember an exception being made last year to allow an extra cat or two in someone's home. That seemed entirely reasonable and appropriate to me. A few well cared for hens sounds like a reasonable idea to me as well. And I'm not aware that allowing dogs or cats in the city has opened any huge "cans of worms." Allowing dogs, cats or even parakeets has nothing to do with goats, cows or elephants; allowing hens has nothing to do with goats, cows or elephants.

Neighborhood hens are not supposed to run loose or keep company with noisy roosters. As long as their owners follow the rules, I have no problem if hens live in my neighborhood.

I share Ald. Roush's regard for the peaceful use of private property and the need to tolerate a few idiosyncrasies on the parts of our neighbors, whether it's mowing an otherwise barren expanse of lawn three times a week, accumulating a compost pile, "planting native," or keeping hens. And I appreciated Ald. Hendricks' willingness to keep the subject open for further discussion.

Thanks very much for letting me add my opinion. As is my custom, my two-cent fee will be waived.

P. Kerney