



Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting Agenda

Tuesday, October 21, 2025 - 5:00 PM

Newton City Hall - Council Chambers
101 W 4th St S
Newton, IA 50208

View this Meeting: Mediacom Channel 12/85/121.12 or www.newtongov.org/cablecast

- I. Call to Order and Roll Call
- II. Review of Minutes of Previous Meeting
 1. Review of Minutes of the 10-7-25 Meeting.
- III. Public Hearing
 1. Continued Public Hearing from 9-9-25 and 10-7-25 Meetings for ZOA25-2: Zoning Ordinance Amendment regarding Urban Chickens and Ducks.
- IV. Other Business
- V. Adjourn

Chair: Dana Woody; **Vice Chair:** Jane Johnson; **Members:** Joshua Cantu, Andrew Elbert, Jeff Holschuh, Dana VanGilder, Bob McCormick

**Minutes of Meeting
Newton Planning and Zoning Commission
Regular Meeting
October 7, 2025**

ROLL CALL: Board members present: Johnson, Holschuh, Woody, VanGilder
Board members absent: Elbert, Cantu, McCormick

STAFF PRESENT: Varsha Borde, Senior City Planner
Nicholas Alexander, City Planner
Craig Armstrong, Economic Development Specialist

OTHERS PRESENT: Erica Paterson, 1421 N 8th Ave E
Alexa Young, 313 E 13th St N
Steve Mullan, Newton City Council

A quorum being present, Chair Woody called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

Minutes. Minutes of the previous meeting from September 9, 2025, were reviewed. **Motion** by Johnson, **seconded** by VanGilder to approve the minutes. **Voice vote**, approved 4-0.

Continued Public Hearing from 9-9-2025:

ZOA25-2: Zoning ordinance amendment in regard to urban chickens.

Alexander presented the staff report for this zoning amendment. He discussed the major points of the draft ordinance. He also detailed the differences in the code and the application fee from the previous meeting on 9-9-2025.

The commissioners then asked questions and discussed potential changes to the draft ordinance. The commission discussed the fee for the chickens and thought it was reasonable. The commission discussed if they had any additional changes or feedback for the ordinance.

Erica Paterson, 1421 N 8th Ave E. She discussed how she thought that the code was well written and well explained. She discussed that she will be getting birds when this would be passed, and was appreciative of the commission moving forward in this process.

Alexa Young, 313 E 13th St N. She discussed that she plans to get chickens soon after the ordinance passes.

Motion by VanGilder to continue the public hearing to the next scheduled meeting, **seconded** by Johnson. **Roll Call vote**, approved 4-0.

Other Business. – Alexander noted that staff would reach out to find a date that works for the commissioners.

Motion by Holschuh to adjourn the meeting, **seconded** by Johnson. **Voice vote**, approved 4-0. Meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:15 PM.

Planning & Zoning Commission Staff Report: ZOA25-2

Applicant: City of Newton
Proposal: To amend the City of Newton Zoning Code – To allow urban chickens and ducks

Proposal: To amend the Newton Zoning Code (Ch. 158), and to amend the Newton Public Nuisance code (Ch. 94). The first proposed ordinance amendment amends the current zoning code to allow Urban Chickens and Ducks in residential areas. The second proposed ordinance amendment amends the current nuisance code to be more inclusive for offensive smells.

Analysis: At their June 2nd, 2025 meeting, the City Council directed the Planning and Zoning Commission to study and review the potential of urban chickens in Newton. On July 22nd, 2025 the planning and zoning commission held a public meeting. At this meeting, city staff presented the potential benefits and drawbacks that urban chickens might present if allowed in Newton. City staff also presented other cities urban chicken ordinances. At this meeting, the planning and zoning commission directed city staff to move forward with writing a potential ordinance for urban chickens. The commission also directed city staff to gather more information from Urbandale and Ankeny, the two model ordinances that staff presented. Below are the answers that city staff received from both Ankeny and Urbandale.

- What has been the general feedback since allowing urban chickens?
 - o There really hasn't been much for either city. Both cities believed there would be a lot of negativity but in reality, there has been minimal feedback. Ankeny said they have actually had positive feedback since allowing urban chickens. Both cities believed there would be more applications for a permit.
- How many initial permits has the city approved since allowing urban chickens?
 - o Ankeny has issued 18 total initial permits. Ankeny had some people drop out from the first year to the second year. Ankeny noted that they think there are low numbers because of the size requirement and permit fee. Urbandale has issued 19 total initial permits. 11 of those permits are still open, 8 have been closed. Both cities noted that they thought there would be a lot more permits.
- How many revocations of a permit has the city had to make for violations?
 - o Neither city has had any revocations of a permit. Ankeny has had two complaints, and one warning has been issued for an individual letting their chickens loose in the yard.

At the September 9th, 2025 Planning and Zoning Commission meeting, city staff presented a draft of the urban chicken ordinance. At this meeting staff was looking to gather the thoughts and ideas of the commissioners in regards to the draft ordinance. At this meeting, staff was able to gather more information in regards to what the commissioners would like to see changed or added. The

commissioners also asked staff to provide an informational sheet that would describe what the regulations are to be able to have urban chickens.

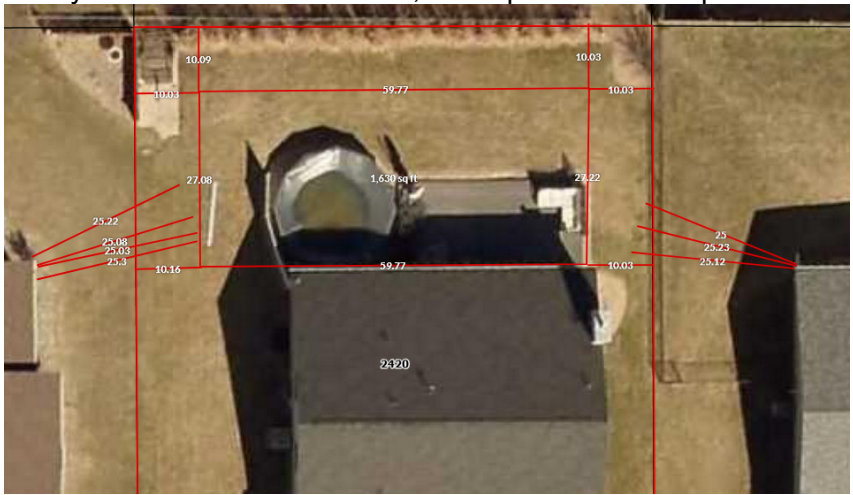
Lastly, at the October 7th, 2025 Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting, the commission had more discussion about the ordinance. Staff continued to gather information on what changes need to occur. At this meeting the commission did not bring up any additional changes.

Staff has since added a table in the ordinance located at 158.115 (B)(2)(a), along with changing 158.115(B)(2) for clarification regarding the lot size and the total number of chickens and/or ducks on a property.

Examples:

Below are examples of where urban chickens could be located in backyards, while also ensuring the setbacks and regulations are followed.

Backyard #1: Total Lot Size – 9,600 Sq. – 4 chickens permitted



Backyard #2: Total Lot Size – 18,229 Sq. Ft. – 9 chickens permitted



Backyard #3: Total Lot Size – 5,500 Sq. Ft. – 2 chickens permitted



Nuisance Code Amendment:

As part of this zoning ordinance amendment, one additional amendment will need to occur. The additional amendment is for Chapter 94.02 (15). This section needed to be amended as it was encompassing primarily commercial and industrial uses as shown below.

“(15) *Offensive smells.* The erecting, continuing or using of any building or other place for the exercise of any trade, employment or manufacture, which, by occasioning noxious exhalations, offensive smells or other annoyances, becomes injurious and dangerous to the health, comfort or property of individuals or the public;”

As shown below in the amended code for 94.02 (15) it encompasses other uses that might produce offensive smells, such as urban chickens.

(15) *Offensive smells.* Allowing offensive smells, noxious exhalations, or odors and other such annoyances to carry beyond property boundaries that become injurious and dangerous to the health, comfort or property of individuals or the public. Such smells may be natural or man-made.

94.02 (16) though is still applicable and does not need to be amended as shown below.

(16) *Filth or noisome substance.* The causing of suffering any offal, filth or noisome substance to be collected or to remain in any place to the prejudice of others;

Permit Fee:

Reccomended Permit Application Fee: \$5 per chicken or duck for the intial and annual permit fee.

Notice of Proposal: The Notice of the meeting and proposal was published in the Newton Daily News once on Friday, October 17th, 2025.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval of this zoning ordinance amendment to allow urban chickens and ducks in more residential areas.

§158.115 Urban Chickens and Ducks

(A) Permit required.

- (1) No person shall raise, harbor or keep chickens and/or ducks within the City of Newton without a valid permit renewed annually and obtained from the Community Development Department under the provisions of this Chapter.
- (2) Application. In order to obtain a permit, an applicant must submit a completed application on forms provided by the Community Development Department and pay all fees required as approved from time to time by resolution of the city council.
- (3) Requirements. The requirement for an applicant to receive a permit shall include:
 - (a) All requirements of the chapter being met;
 - (b) All fees, as may be approved from time to time by City Council resolution, for the permit are paid in full;
 - (c) All judgements in the city's favor and against the applicant have been paid in full;
 - (d) The property to be permitted shall contain only one single-family dwelling unit that is owned and occupied by the permittee.
 - (e) The applicant has successfully completed an approved class in raising chickens in an urban setting. This is for all applicants, including those who are just raising ducks. A certificate or other documentation of completion shall be provided.
- (4) Issuance of permit. If the Community Development Department concludes as a result of the information contained in the application that the requirements for a permit have been met, then the permit shall be issued. The permit shall expire one year from issuance.
- (5) Denial, suspension, revocation, non-renewal. The Community Service Officer or Community Development Department may deny, suspend, revoke, or decline to renew any permit issued for any of the following grounds:
 - (a) False statements on any application or other information required by this chapter to be given by the applicant.
 - (b) Failure to pay any application, penalty, re-inspection or re-instatement fee required by this chapter
 - (c) Failure to correct deficiencies noted in notices of violation in the time specified by the notice.
 - (d) Failure to comply with the provisions of an approved mitigation/remediation plan
 - (e) Failure to comply with any provision of this chapter.
- (6) Notification. A decision to deny, suspend, revoke, or not renew a permit shall be in writing, delivered by ordinary mail or in person to the address indicated on the application.
- (7) Effect of denial, or revocation. When an application for a permit is denied, or when a permit is revoked, the applicant may not reapply for a new permit for a period of one year from the date of the denial or revocation.
- (8) Appeals. No permit may be denied, suspended, revoked, or not renewed without notice and an opportunity to be heard is given to the applicant or holder of the permit. In any instance where the permit has been denied, suspended, revoked, or not renewed, the applicant or holder of the permit may appeal the decision within ten business days of receipt by the applicant or holder of the permit of the notice of the decision. The applicant or holder of the permit will be given an opportunity for a hearing. The decision of the hearing, the

appeal, or any decision by the Community Service Officer or Community Development Department which is not appealed in accordance to this chapter shall be deemed final action.

(B) Number and type of chickens and ducks allowed.

- (1) When a tract of land has a total lot size that is less than 4,000 square feet, chickens and ducks are prohibited.
- (2) When a tract of land has a total lot size of 4,000 square feet or more, a permittee may keep up to two (2) female chickens (hens) and/or female ducks. For each additional 2,000 square feet of lot size beyond the initial 4,000 square feet, one (1) additional female chicken and/or duck may be kept up to a maximum combined total of ten (10) female chickens and/or ducks allowed on the permittee’s property.

a. Urban Chickens Lot Size and Quantity Regulations Table

Square Footage	Total Allowed
0 – 3,999 sq. ft.	0 Allowed
4,000 – 5,999 sq. ft.	2 Allowed
6,000 – 7,999 sq. ft.	3 Allowed
8,000 – 9,999 sq. ft.	4 Allowed
10,000 – 11,999 sq. ft.	5 Allowed
12,000 – 13,999 sq. ft.	6 Allowed
14,000 – 15,999 sq. ft.	7 Allowed
16,000 – 17,999 sq. ft.	8 Allowed
18,000 – 19,999 sq. ft.	9 Allowed
20,000+ sq. ft.	10 Allowed

- (3) Female chickens; meaning members of the subspecies *Gallus domesticus*, a common domesticated fowl are allowed on a permittee’s property.
- (4) Female ducks; hens, any of various swimming birds (family Anatidae, the duck family) in which the neck and legs are short, the feet typically webbed, the bill often broad and flat, and the sexes usually different from each other in plumage.

(C) Tracts of land allowed. Permits will be granted only for tracts of land that contain one single-family dwelling unit unless in A-1 Agricultural Zone.

(D) Non-commercial use only. A permit shall not allow the permittee to engage in chicken or duck breeding, sale of chickens or ducks, or fertilizer production for commercial purposes.

(E) Enclosures.

- (1) Enclosures include henhouses, coops, chicken or duck runs, and chicken or duck tractors.
- (2) Chickens and/or ducks must be kept in an enclosure at all times. Chickens and/or ducks shall be secured within a henhouse or coop during non-daylight hours.
- (3) Enclosures must be kept in a clean, dry, odor-free, neat, and sanitary conditions at all times.
- (4) Enclosures must provide adequate ventilation, adequate sun, and shade and must be impenetrable to rodents, wild birds, and predators, including dogs and cats.

(5) Henhouses and coops

- (a) Henhouses or coops shall be designed to provide safe and healthy living conditions for chickens and/or ducks with a minimum of 4 square feet per bird while minimizing adverse impacts to other residents in the neighborhood.
- (b) Henhouses or coops shall be enclosed on all sides and shall have a roof and doors. Access doors shall be able to be shut and locked at night. Opening windows and vents shall be covered with predator and bird proof wire of 1 inch or smaller openings.
- (c) The materials used in making an enclosure shall be uniform for each element of the structure such that the walls are made of the same material, the roof has the same shingles or other covering, and any windows or openings are constructed using the same materials. The use of scrap, waste board, sheet metal, or similar materials is prohibited. Henhouses shall be well maintained.
- (d) Enclosures shall only be located in the rear yard as defined by Newton Municipal Code.
- (e) Enclosures must be located at least 10 feet from the rear and side property lines and at least 25 feet from any neighboring residential dwelling.

(F) Odor and noise impacts

- (1) Odors from chickens or ducks, chicken or duck manure, or other chicken and duck related substances shall not be perceptible beyond the boundaries of the permitted tract of land.
- (2) Noise from chickens and ducks shall not be loud enough beyond the boundaries of the permitted parcel at the property boundaries to disturb persons of reasonable sensitivity.

(G) Predators, rodents, insects, and parasites. The permittee shall take necessary action to reduce the attraction of predators and rodents and the potential infestation of insects and parasites. Chickens or ducks found to be infested with insects and parasites that may result in unhealthy conditions to human habitation must be removed at the direction of the Community Service Officer.

(H) Feed and water. Chickens and ducks shall be provided with access to feed and clean water at all times. The feed and water shall be unavailable to rodents, wild birds, and predators.

(I) Waste storage and removal. All stored manure shall be covered by a fully enclosed structure with a roof or lid over the entire structure. All other manure not used for composting or fertilizing shall be removed. The enclosures, and surrounding areas must be kept free from trash and accumulated droppings. Uneaten feed shall be removed in a timely manner.

(J) Chickens and/or ducks at large. The Permittee shall not allow the Permittee's chickens and/or ducks to roam off the permitted tract of land. No dog, cat, or other domesticated animal which kills a chicken and/or duck off the permitted tract of land will, for that reason alone, be considered a dangerous or vicious animal or the city's responsibility to enforce its animal control provisions.

(K) Unlawful acts.

- (1) It shall be unlawful for any person to keep chickens or ducks in violation of any provision of this chapter or any other provision of this code of ordinances.
- (2) It shall be unlawful for any owner of property to allow chickens or ducks to be kept on the property in violation of the provisions of this chapter.

- (3) No person shall keep chickens or ducks inside a single-family dwelling unit or any other structure than an approved henhouse.
 - (4) No person shall slaughter any chickens or ducks within the city outside of legally operating poultry production facilities.
 - (5) No person shall keep a rooster, drake, swan, goose, or any other poultry or fowl.
 - (6) No person shall keep chickens or ducks on vacant or uninhabited property
- (L) **Nuisances.** Any violation of the terms of this chapter that constitutes a health hazard or that interferes with the use or enjoyment of neighboring property is a nuisance and may be abated under the general nuisance abatement provisions in Chapter 94 of this Code of Ordinances.

BACKYARD CHICKEN & DUCK PERMIT Information for Newton Residents



GENERAL INFORMATION

- Permits are valid for one year and must be renewed annually.
- If a permit is denied or revoked, you cannot reapply for one year.

PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

- Complete the Iowa State Extension “Getting Started with Backyard Chickens” course. Proof of completion is required.
- Properties under 4,000 sq. ft. cannot keep chickens or ducks.
- Properties over 4,000 sq. ft. may keep 2 female chicken or duck, with an additional bird allowed per 2,000 sq. ft.
- A maximum of 10 birds can be kept on property that is 20,000+ sq. ft.
- Only single-family dwellings qualify, except in A-1 Agricultural zones.
- Permits are non-commercial—no breeding, selling, or commercial fertilizer production.

ENCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS

- Chickens and ducks must be kept in enclosures at all times and secured at night.
- Enclosures must be clean, dry, odor-free, ventilated, sun/shade-accessible, and predator-proof.

HENHOUSE/COOP STANDARDS:

- Minimum 4 sq. ft. per bird inside the coop or henhouse.

- Fully enclosed with roof and lockable doors; windows/vents must have predator-proof wire (1-inch or smaller).
- Use uniform construction materials; scrap or mismatched materials are not allowed.
- Enclosures must be in the rear yard, 10 ft. from property lines, and 25 ft. from neighboring homes.

NUISANCE & SAFETY RULES

- Odors and noise must not extend beyond your property.
- Birds must have constant access to feed and water, protected from rodents and predators.
- Manure must be composted in a covered structure or removed if unused.
- Birds cannot roam off the property.
- Chickens or ducks cannot be kept inside your home
- Roosters, drakes, swans, geese, and other poultry are prohibited.
- Birds cannot be kept on vacant or uninhabited property.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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