

COMMISSIONERS OF RIDGELY
SEPTEMBER 17, 2025
WORKSHOP



The Commissioners of Ridgely met on the above date at 6:00 pm in the town hall for a charter revision workshop. The following were in attendance: President Brad Sears, Commissioner John Hurley, Commissioner Chad Leister, Clerk-Treasurer Stephanie Berkey, Financial Assistant Gerald Sutton, Andrew Myer and Christine Eckrich.

President Sears opened the meeting. The following proposed changes to the town charter were discussed:

Section 4 Qualifications for Commissioners

- Prior to December 2010, home ownership was a requirement for candidacy. The Commissioners will seek more information from the town attorney to have this added.
- President Sears would like to see an addition in this section for background and suitability that would require potential candidates to disclose their credit history, no convictions of a felony or any misdemeanor involving violence or moral turpitude, and drug testing. Candidates must not hold any conflictingly elected public office at time of swearing in or term of office. Commissioners Leister did not agree with the credit check.

Section 5. Same; notice, voters' qualifications, procedure.

- D Regarding election judges, change from the President appoints to the Clerk-Treasurer appoints. The President is the incumbent and to maintain fairness, should not appoint judges.

Section 7: Elections; Tie votes

- Change to provide for a runoff election in the case of a tie, to be held within 30 days after the certification of the initial election results. The runoff election shall include only the candidates who tied with the highest number of votes. The runoff election shall be conducted in accordance with the election procedures specified in the Charter and applicable Town and State election laws.
- Incumbents, if any, shall continue to serve in their current offices until the runoff election results are certified.
- If a tie occurs in the runoff election the winner shall be determined by a random selection, such as a coin toss or drawing of lots, conducted immediately after the runoff election. The method of random selection shall be publicly announced in advance by the Town Election Official.
- The result of the runoff election or, if necessary, the random selection, shall be final and conclusive. The winner shall be duly certified and shall assume office in accordance with the provisions of this Charter.

Section 23 Police was tabled due to pending litigation from the former Ridgely Police Department.

Section 36. Acting President

- Change to have Commissioner in 2nd year term serve as President in the event the President is incapacitated.

The attached document, Domestic Poultry Discussion Points for Commissioners Workshop, was reviewed. The following was discussed:

- Lines 15-19 Single family homes only
- Lines 21-23 Minimum lot size in town is 7,500 square feet
- Lines 29-38 Commissioner Leister was not in favor of neighbor approval as this could cause problems down the road with feuding neighbors. Lister Estates does not allow chickens. We need to consult with town attorney regarding the HOA rules vs. town rules.
- Lines 51-55 Commissioner Leister discussed taller peaks as they are easier to clean. The Commissioners suggested a height of no more than 8 ft.
- Lines 120-136 Larger coops may need a higher fee depending on footers, etc. The town will have the right to inspect at any time.

Proposed changes will be given to the town attorney to review and draft ordinances to be introduced at later meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Stephanie Berkey, CMC
Clerk-Treasurer

(Proposed) Domestic Poultry (Chickens) Discussion Points for Commissioners' Workshop (rev.)

September 17, 2025

1 Definitions

2 "**Domestic Poultry**" means domesticated hens (female chickens) only. Roosters (male
3 chickens), ducks, geese, turkeys, guinea fowl, and other poultry are expressly prohibited.

4 "**Coop**" means a structure designed to house domestic poultry, including both the enclosed
5 shelter and any attached outdoor run area.

6 "**Property Owner**" means the record owner of real property as shown in the land records of
7 Caroline County, Maryland.

8 Permit Requirement

9 No person shall keep domestic poultry ~~shall be kept~~ within the corporate limits of the Town of
10 Ridgely without first obtaining a Domestic Poultry Permit from the Town. Permits shall be
11 renewed annually and are non-transferable.

12 Zoning and Property Requirements

13 A. Allowed Zones

14 Domestic poultry keeping is permitted in the following zoning districts:

- 15 • R1 (Single Family Residential)
- 16 • R2 (Medium Density Residential)
- 17 • **R3 (Single Family Residential, Single Family Residential with Accessory Dwelling Units**
18 **(ADUs), and Group Homes). Need to determine/agree on minimum lot size(s)**
- 19 • Subject to all requirements herein

20 B. Property Size Requirements

- 21 • Minimum lot size: **7,500** square feet
- 22 • ~~Properties less than 6,000 square feet are prohibited from keeping domestic poultry~~ **Town**
23 **minimum lot sizes are 7500 square feet**

24 C. Number of Hens Permitted

- 25 • Lots ~~6,000~~ **7500** to 10,999 sq ft: Maximum 4 hens
- 26 • Lots 11,000 sq ft (**and larger**): Maximum 6 hens

- 27 • ~~Lots 21,000+ sq ft: Maximum 8 hens~~ Not sure anyone needs more than 6 hens at a single
28 address

29 Neighbor Consent Requirement

30 Prior to issuance of any Domestic Poultry Permit, the applicant must obtain written consent from
31 all property owners (not renters or tenants) of parcels that share a property boundary with the
32 applicant's property. Such consent shall:

- 33 A. Be notarized
34 B. Clearly identify the consenting property by street address
35 C. Be signed by all record owners of the consenting property
36 D. Acknowledge awareness of the proposed poultry keeping operation
37 E. Remain valid for the life of the permit unless revoked in writing What happens when/if
38 consent is revoked? (See "Permit Revocation" below)

39 Setback and Location Requirements

40 A. Coop Placement

41 All coops and outdoor runs must be located:

- 42 • Minimum 20 feet from all property lines
43 • Minimum 50 feet from any dwelling on an adjacent property
44 • Minimum 20 feet from the applicant's dwelling
45 • In the rear yard only (behind the front building line)
46 • Minimum 50 feet from any well or water source

47 B. Access Requirements

- 48 • Adequate access must be maintained for Town inspection
49 • Coops shall not obstruct drainage patterns or utility easements

50

51 Coop Construction Standards

52 A. Size Requirements

- 53 • Minimum 4 square feet of indoor space per hen
- 54 • Minimum 10 square feet of outdoor run space per hen up to a maximum of 40 sq. feet
- 55 • Minimum ceiling height of 18 inches in coop interior

56 B. Construction Standards

- 57 • Weather-resistant construction with proper ventilation
- 58 • Predator-proof design with secure latching mechanisms
- 59 • Adequate natural lighting
- 60 • Easy-clean design with removable roosting bars and nest boxes
- 61 • Proper drainage to prevent standing water
- 62 • All materials must be maintained in good repair

63 C. Fencing

- 64 • Outdoor runs must be fully enclosed with fencing
- 65 • Minimum fence height of 6 feet or fully enclosed run with roof/netting
- 66 • Fencing must be buried a minimum 6 inches below ground level or have hardware cloth
- 67 • apron extending 12 inches outward from base

68 Public Nuisance Prevention

69 A. Noise Control

- 70 • Hens must be confined to coops
- 71 • No amplified sound equipment (automatic doors, etc.) audible beyond property lines
- 72 • Four substantiated violations in a 12-month period will result in permit revocation and
- 73 • five-year ineligibility for reapplication!

74 B. Odor Control

- 75 • Coops must be cleaned regularly to prevent odor
- 76 • Manure must be properly stored in **airtight** odor-proof containers and disposed of on at
- 77 • least a weekly basis **Not sure the Bigg Tyme will take this kind of waste away [B.S.**
- 78 • **Comment:** I conducted AI queries of **all** municipal and county codes in Caroline
- 79 • County, Kent County, and beyond. Results indicated silence on this question. County
- 80 • Codes focus on agricultural and animal processing (e.g. FPR) disposal of poultry manure,
- 81 • dead birds, etc., but are silent regarding municipalities. I called the Town of Denton and
- 82 • was told that this has not been an issue to date.]
- 83 • No storage of manure within 50 feet of any property line

84 C. Sanitation Requirements

- 85 • Coops must be kept clean and sanitary at all times
- 86 • Feed must be stored in rodent-proof containers
- 87 • No accumulation of debris, old feed, or unsanitary conditions
- 88 • Adequate pest control measures required

89 **D. Vector Control**

- 90 • All reasonable measures must be taken to prevent attraction of flies, rodents and other
- 91 pests
- 92 • Any rodents or pests must be promptly eliminated and appropriate corrective measures
- 93 taken to prevent re-attraction.
- 94 • Standing water and spilled feed must be eliminated promptly

95 **Feed and Care Requirements**

96 **A. Feed Storage**

- 97 • All feed must be stored in tightly sealed, rodent-proof containers
- 98 • Feed storage must be within an enclosed structure (garage, shed, or coop)
- 99 • No outdoor storage of feed permitted

100 **B. Water Systems**

- 101 • Adequate supply of fresh, clean water must be available at all times
- 102 • Water systems must be designed to minimize spillage and standing water

103 **C. General Care**

- 104 • Hens must receive adequate care, food, water, shelter, and veterinary attention
- 105 • Sick, diseased, or injured hens must receive prompt appropriate care or be humanely
- 106 euthanized

107 **State Registration Requirement**

108 All domestic poultry operations must comply with Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA)
109 registration requirements for poultry flocks. ~~Regardless of size,~~ **The MDA registration number**
110 **must be supplied to the Town on the Domestic Poultry Permit application.**

111 **Prohibited Activities**

112 The following activities are expressly prohibited:

- 113 A. Keeping roosters or any male domestic poultry
- 114 B. Slaughtering or processing poultry on the premises
- 115 C. Commercial sale of eggs or poultry products

- 116 D. Breeding or hatching operations
- 117 E. Keeping poultry in front yards or side yards
- 118 F. Free-ranging poultry
- 119 G. Any activity that creates a public nuisance

120 **Permit Application Process**

121 **A. Application Requirements**

122 Applications for Domestic Poultry Permits must include:

- 123 1. Completed **Domestic Poultry** application form
- 124 2. **Building Permit application**
- 125 3. Site plan showing coop location and setbacks
- 126 4. Coop construction plans and specifications
- 127 5. Notarized neighbor consent forms
- 128 6. Proof of Maryland Department of Agriculture registration
- 129 7. Application fee of ~~\$50~~ **\$200** (annual renewal fee of ~~\$25~~ **\$150**) *Need to discuss & ne/agree*
- 130 *on fee amounts*

131 **B. Inspection Required**

- 132 • Initial inspection required before permit issuance **Stated application/renewal fee does not**
- 133 **cover the cost of one inspection, let alone three. (see revised Application fees (above).)**
- 134 • Two unannounced inspections per year
- 135 • Annual renewal inspection required – may coincide with one unannounced inspection
- 136 • Complaint-based inspections as needed **Who will cover the cost?**

137 **C. Permit Display**

138 Valid permits must be posted in a weather-resistant holder on or near the coop structure and be
139 visible for inspection.

140 **Enforcement and Penalties**

141 **A. Violations**

142 Violations of this ordinance may result in:

- 143 1. Written warning for first minor offense
- 144 2. Civil citation with fine of \$100-\$500 per violation per day
- 145 3. Permit suspension or revocation
- 146 4. Order to remove poultry and structures **(14 days) See Permit Revocation (below).**

147 **B. Nuisance Complaints**

- 148 • Town will investigate all written complaints within 5 business days
- 149 • Substantiated complaints may result in corrective action orders
- 150 • Failure to correct violations within Town-specified timeframe may result in permit
- 151 revocation **(See Permit Revocation (below).)**

152 **C. Emergency Situations**

153 In cases of immediate threat to public health or safety, the Town may order immediate cessation
 154 of poultry keeping activities pending resolution.

155 **Permit Revocation**

156 Permits may be revoked for:

- 157 • Violation of any provision of this ordinance
- 158 • Failure to maintain neighbor consent
- 159 • Four substantiated nuisance complaints within a 12-month period
- 160 • Failure to pay fees or penalties
- 161 • Providing false information on applications
- 162 • **Need to discuss/include detailed revocation Procedures (See attached)**

163 **Severability**

164 If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase, or portion of this ordinance is held invalid or
 165 unconstitutional, such portion shall be deemed severable, and the remainder shall continue in full
 166 force and effect.

167

168 **COMPARISON WITH NEIGHBORING TOWNS**

Town	Max Hens	Roosters	Min. Lot Size Req.	Coop Setbacks	Neighbor Sign-off	Notes/Filing	Slaughter
Denton	4	No	10,000 sq. ft.	20 ft	No*	Annual state reg.	No
Greensboro	4	No	Not specified	Not specified**	No	Treated as pets	Not specified

Town	Max Hens	Roosters	Min. Lot Size Req.	Coop Setbacks	Neighbor Sign-off	Notes/Filing	Slaughter
Ridgely (proposed)	4-6	No	7,500 sq. ft.	20 ft	Yes (owners)	Annual state reg.; Town permit	No
Poolesville	6	No	Not specified	15 ft (setback)	No	Course + permit	Not specified
Annapolis	5	No	Not specified	5+ ft	Yes (abutting)	Registry + inspection	Not specified

169 *Denton and several towns require a Planning Commission/Code review but not explicit
170 neighbor signature.
171 **Greensboro allows up to 4 fowl as pets, but the limitations on coop placement are not
172 specified in public summaries.

173 **Regional Analysis:**

174 **Montgomery County, MD**

- 175 • Allows chickens in residential areas
- 176 • 25 feet from lot lines, 100 feet from neighboring dwellings
- 177 • Rear yard placement only
- 178 • More restrictive setbacks than proposed Ridgely ordinance

179 **Rockville, MD**

- 180 • Maximum 5 hens permitted
- 181 • Single-family homes only (no townhouses)
- 182 • Requires permit and neighbor notification
- 183 • No roosters permitted
- 184 • Similar notification requirements to Ridgely proposal

185 **Howard County, MD**

- 186 • Up to 8 hens allowed
- 187 • 15 feet from property lines, 50 feet from neighboring houses

- 188 • 10,000 sq ft minimum lot size
- 189 • State registration required

190 **Prince George's County, MD**

- 191 • Specific zoning restrictions (R-O-S, O-S, R-E, R-A, R-R zones)
- 192 • R-R zones require 20,000+ sq ft lots
- 193 • More restrictive than Ridgely proposal

194 **How Ridgely's Proposal Compares:**

195 **More Permissive Than:**

- 196 • Montgomery County (closer setbacks allowed)
- 197 • Prince George's County (smaller lot size requirements)
- 198 • **Denton, Caroline County (smaller lot size requirements)**

199 **Similar To:**

- 200 • Rockville (neighbor consent, permit required, no roosters)
- 201 • Howard County (up to 8 hens on larger lots, state registration)

202 **More Restrictive Than:**

- 203 • Some rural counties that may allow unlimited numbers

204 **Unique Features:**

- 205 1. Graduated hen limits based on lot size
- 206 2. Specific neighbor consent requirements for property owners only
- 207 3. Comprehensive nuisance prevention measures