

COMMISSIONERS OF RIDGELY

ORDINANCE NO. 2026-400 *AS AMENDED*

AN ORDINANCE concerning

CHAPTER 64 (ANIMALS) OF THE CODE OF THE TOWN OF RIDGELY

FOR the purpose of amending Chapter 64 (Animals) of the Code of the Town of Ridgely for the purpose of providing for the keeping of domestic poultry and the construction, use, and maintenance of coops therefor within the corporate limits of the Town of Ridgely, subject to certain conditions, and defining terms associated therewith; providing that the title of this Ordinance shall be deemed a fair summary; and generally relating to animals in the Town of Ridgely.

RECITALS

WHEREAS, pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Local Gov't § 5-202, and § 37 of the Charter of the Town of Ridgely (the "Charter"), the Commissioners of Ridgely (the "Commissioners") are authorized and empowered to pass ordinances not contrary to law as they may deem necessary for the good government of the Town of Ridgely (the "Town") to preserve the healthy, peace, safety, and well-being of the residents of the Town; and

WHEREAS, in furtherance of the foregoing, on June 2, 1997, the Commissioners passed Ordinance No. 141 for the purpose of regulating the keeping of animals within the corporate limits of the Town, the provisions of which are currently codified as Chapter 64 (Animals) of the Code of the Town of Ridgely (the "Town Code"); and

WHEREAS, Chapter 64 of the Town Code currently prohibits the keeping of poultry and the maintenance of chicken or pigeon coops within the corporate limits of the Town; and

WHEREAS, the Commissioners are desirous of amending Chapter 64 of the Town Code to provide for the keeping of domestic poultry and the construction, use, and maintenance of coops therefor within the corporate limits of the Town, subject to certain conditions, and defining terms associated therewith as more fully set forth herein below.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT HEREBY ORDAINED AND ENACTED by the Commissioners of Ridgely that:

SECTION 1. Chapter 64 (Animals) of the Town Code is hereby amended as follows:

ARTICLE I
Animals Generally

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§ 64-2. Definitions.

For the purpose of this chapter, the following words and phrases shall have the meaning indicated:

* * *

COOP – A structure designed to house domestic poultry, including both the enclosed shelter and any attached outdoor run area.

DOMESTIC POULTRY – Domesticated hens (female chickens) only. Roosters (male chickens), ducks, geese, turkeys, guinea fowl, and other poultry are expressly prohibited from the definition of “domestic poultry” as used in this chapter.

* * *

PROPERTY OWNER – The record owner of real property as shown in the Land Records of Caroline County, Maryland.

* * *

§ 64-4. Keeping of certain animals prohibited.

The breeding, feeding, pasturing and/or penning of horses, hogs, pigs, poultry **(other than domestic poultry as authorized under this chapter)**, pigeons, rabbits, hares or guinea pigs and the maintenance of stables, chicken or pigeon coops **(other than coops as authorized under this chapter)**, piggeries, pig pens or pig runs within the limits of the Town is hereby prohibited.

§ 64-5. Animals running at large or unattended.

It shall be unlawful for any person to permit an animal to be turned loose or to be allowed to run at large within the Town limits or to leave a draft animal, whether hitched to a vehicle or not, to stand upon any street or alley without being securely tied or fastened or in the immediate custody of the owner, driver or some competent person.

ARTICLE II

Dogs

§ 64-6. License required; rabies vaccination.

No person shall own or have custody of any dog over four months of age unless the dog is licensed by Caroline County in accordance with Caroline County public local laws and has been vaccinated against rabies in a procedure approved by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. This provision shall not apply to dogs in the Town owned by a nonresident, provided that the dogs are duly licensed in their home city, county or state and provided that the owner sends a valid rabies vaccination certificate for the dog while the dog is in Town.

* * *

ARTICLE III
Domestic Poultry

§ 64-15. Permit required.

A. No person shall keep domestic poultry within the corporate limits of the Town without first obtaining a Domestic Poultry Permit from the Town. Permits shall be subject to renewal annually and are non-transferable. Valid permits shall be posted on the coop, in a clearly visible location for Town inspection and in a weather-resistant holder. Permits are not subject to consent or approval of neighboring property owners; however, nothing herein shall supersede any restrictive covenants of a homeowners' association prohibiting the keeping of domestic poultry, which covenants shall prevail over the provisions of this Article.

B. Applications for Domestic Poultry Permits shall include the following:

- (1) Completed application form provided by the Town;**
- (2) Building permit application, if applicable;**
- (3) Site plan showing coop locations and setbacks;**
- (4) Coop construction plans and specifications;**
- (5) Proof of Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) registration; and**
- (6) Application fee of \$50.**

C. Coops; inspection required. Coops shall be inspected for compliance with the provisions of this chapter, as well as the Town's Building Code and Zoning Code, before a Domestic Poultry Permit may be issued. Following the issuance of a Domestic Poultry Permit, the Town shall only inspect coops upon receipt of a complaint regarding the same. Coops, and the keeping of domestic poultry, shall comply with the following requirements, all of which shall prevail over any provisions of the Building Code or the Zoning Code to the contrary:

- (1) Number of domestic poultry permitted:**
 - (a) Lots between 7,500 square feet and 10,999 square feet – Maximum of four hens;**
 - (b) Lots 11,000 square feet or more - Maximum of six hens.**
- (2) Coop setbacks. All coops, including the attached outdoor run area, shall be located as follows:**

- (a) Minimum of 10 feet from all adjacent property lines;
- (b) Minimum of ~~50~~ 20 feet from any dwelling on an adjacent property;
- (c) Minimum of ~~20~~ ten feet from the applicant's dwelling;
- (d) In the rear yard only, behind the front building line; and
- (e) Minimum of 50 feet from any well or water source.

(3) Access requirements.

- (a) Adequate access must be maintained for Town inspection in accordance with this Article.
- (b) Coops shall not obstruct drainage patterns or utility easements.

(4) Size requirements for coops.

- (a) Maximum height (measured from the peak of the coop) – eight feet;
- (b) Minimum of two square feet of indoor space per hen; and
- (c) Minimum of ten square feet of outdoor run space per hen.*

(5) Construction standards for coops. Coops shall:

- (a) Be constructed with weather-resistant material and ensure proper ventilation;
- (b) Be secured from predators, with secure latching mechanisms;
- (c) Have adequate natural lighting;
- (d) Have proper drainage to prevent standing water; and
- (e) Have all materials maintained in good condition.

(6) Fencing standards for coops.

- (a) Outdoor runs shall be fully enclosed with fencing and a roof or netting.
- (b) Fencing must be buried a minimum of six inches below ground level or have a hardware cloth apron extending 12 inches outward from the base.

§ 64-16. Nuisance prevention.

A. Noise control.

- (1) Domestic poultry shall be confined to coops.**
- (2) No amplified sound associated with a coop, such as automatic doors, shall be audible beyond the property owner's property line.**

B. Odor control.

- (1) Coops shall be cleaned regularly to prevent odor.**
- (2) Manure shall be properly stored in airtight, leak-proof and odor-proof containers and disposed of at least weekly. No manure may be stored within ~~50~~ 20 feet of any property line unless it is deposited in Town-designated receptacles for household waste and contained as set forth in this subsection.**

C. Sanitation.

- (1) Coops shall be kept in a sanitary condition.**
- (2) The coop and surrounding area shall be kept free of debris, old feed, or other unsanitary conditions.**
- (3) Adequate pest control measures shall be used to prevent rodents, insects, and other pests and vermin. Any rodents, insects, or other pests or vermin shall be eliminated promptly.**
- (4) Standing water and spilled feed shall be eliminated promptly.**

§ 64-17. Feed and care requirements.

- A. Domestic poultry feed shall be stored in sealed, rodent-proof containers.**
- B. All feed must be stored within an enclosed structure, such as a garage, shed, or coop. Feed shall not be stored outside an enclosed structure.**
- C. An adequate supply of fresh, clean water shall be available at all times. Water systems shall be designed to minimize spillage and standing water.**
- D. Domestic poultry must receive adequate care, food, water, shelter, and veterinary care. Sick, diseased, or injured domestic poultry must receive prompt care or be humanely euthanized.**

§ 64-18. State registration required.

All domestic poultry operations shall comply with MDA registration requirements for poultry flocks. The MDA registration number shall be provided to the Town as part of the Domestic Poultry Permit application.

§ 64-19. Prohibited acts.

The following acts are expressly prohibited under this Article:

A. Keeping roosters or any male domestic poultry;

B. Slaughtering or processing poultry on the premises;

C. Commercial sale of eggs or poultry products;

D. Breeding or hatching operations;

E. Keeping poultry in front yards or side yards;

F. Permitting free-ranging poultry; or

G. Any other activity that creates a public nuisance under the Town Code.

ARTICLE IV
Enforcement

§ 64-20. Violations and penalties.

A. Except as otherwise provided in § ~~64-14~~ Article II of this chapter and in subsection B below, any person violating any provisions of this chapter shall be guilty of a municipal infraction.

B. A violation of Article III of this chapter shall be punishable as follows:

(1) An initial violation of Article III shall result in a written warning and corrective action to be taken, which corrective action shall be completed within the time set forth in the warning.

(2) Failure to complete the corrective action set forth in the warning letter described in (B)(1) above or a subsequent violation of Article III shall be punishable as a municipal infraction and subject to a fine of \$100 for the first subsequent violation and \$500 for each additional violation thereafter. Each day that a violation continues shall be deemed a separate violation and subject to a separate fine, without the need for issuance of an additional citation from the Town.

(3) In addition to the fine set forth in (B)(2) above, a subsequent violation of Article III after the initial violation may, in the Town's sole discretion, result in revocation of the Domestic Poultry Permit. Four (4) violations of Article III within a twelve (12) month period, including the initial written warning, shall result in revocation of the Domestic Poultry Permit. In case of revocation of a Domestic Poultry Permit, all Domestic Poultry and the coop shall be lawfully removed from the premises within fourteen (14) calendar days. Any individual for whom a Domestic Poultry Permit has been revoked shall be ineligible to be issued another Domestic Poultry Permit for at least five (5) years from the date of revocation.

C. The Commissioners, in their sole discretion, may order an immediate cessation of any Domestic Poultry keeping if the public health, safety, and welfare so require.

SECTION 2. The recitals to this Ordinance are incorporated herein and deemed a substantive part of this Ordinance.

SECTION 3. Any person keeping domestic poultry as of the effective date of this Ordinance shall have sixty (60) days therefrom to obtain a Domestic Poultry Permit and otherwise comply with the provisions hereof before the Town may initiate enforcement action hereunder.

SECTION 4. In this Ordinance, unless a section of the Town Code is expressly repealed in its entirety and reenacted, new or added language is underlined and in boldface type and deleted text is crossed out and enclosed in brackets. Substantive language added after the date of introduction is italicized and in boldface type. Substantive language deleted after the date of introduction is crossed out with a double strikethrough.

SECTION 5. If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase, or portion of this Ordinance is for any reason held invalid or unconstitutional by any court or competent jurisdiction, such portion shall be deemed a separate, distinct, and independent provision and such holding shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Ordinance, it being the intent of the Commissioners of Ridgely that this Ordinance shall stand, notwithstanding the invalidity of any section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase, or portion hereof.

SECTION 6. All ordinances or parts of ordinances inconsistent with the provisions of this Ordinance are hereby repealed to the extent of such inconsistency.

SECTION 7. The title of this Ordinance, or a condensed version thereof, shall be deemed to be, and is, a fair summary of this Ordinance for publication and all other purposes.

This Ordinance was introduced at a public meeting of the Commissioners of Ridgely, held on the ____ day of ____, 2026, and having been reviewed and considered for final action, was duly passed and adopted ***AS AMENDED*** on the ____ day of ____, 2026.

AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED BY THE COMMISSIONERS OF RIDGELY, that this Ordinance shall become effective at the expiration of 20 calendar days following its passage, or on the ____ day of ____, 2026.

Clarence B. (Brad) Sears, President

John Hurley, Commissioner

Chad Leister, Commissioner

Attest:

Stephanie Berkey, Town Clerk-Treasurer

Approved as to form:

Patrick W. Thomas, Town Attorney