



CITY OF MANITOWOC

WISCONSIN, USA

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November 5, 2025

To: Members of the Common Council
From: Eric Nycz, City Attorney; Captain Matt Wallander, Manitowoc Police Department
Re: **25-0785 Ordinance to Amend Section 11.220 of the Manitowoc Municipal Code
Regulating Animal Licenses**

The proposed Ordinance amendment does not change any requirement already imposed by the code for keeping chickens in the city. It has simply been requested to protect both license applicants and their neighbors.

On multiple occasions this year, a chicken coop, chicken enclosure, or both have been misplaced and found incongruent to the ordinance. This was done through either willful misreading of the ordinance or on accident. As a result, neighbors experienced chicken excrement in their yard and license-holders had to make unexpected, major investments or choose to destroy their animals. All of these outcomes would have been prevented by a simple inspection prior to issuance of the license, no different than having Building Inspection review and approve construction plans and job sites.

At its November 4, 2025 meeting, the Finance Committee requested information regarding the number of complaints in the city regarding chickens. These are the numbers:

2022: 3 total complaints
2023: 5 total complaints
2024: 3 total complaints
2025: 10 complaints through this week

To further assist the Council in better understanding this issue, please review the current language of the ordinance that addresses chicken enclosures:

The chickens shall be provided with a covered enclosure and must be kept in the covered enclosure or fenced enclosure at all times. The enclosure shall be located at least 25 feet from any residential structure on an adjacent lot.

The plain language of the ordinance makes it clear that both the covered and fenced enclosures must be located at least 25 feet from any residential structure on an adjacent lot. We have seen too many license holders assume that their backyard fence qualifies as an enclosure pursuant to the definition. As a result, their chickens will defecate along property lines and excrement leaks onto neighboring properties. This is obviously unacceptable and unsanitary. When confronted with having to construct an additional fence within their already-fenced-in-backyard, license-holders can become agitated. We will avoid this entire calamity by having the police inspect the enclosures before a permit is issued, ensuring both understanding and compliance.

CITY ATTORNEY ERIC NYCZ

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There was some discussion at the meeting regarding standards for the inspection. Please note that there are no subjective elements to the inspection. A tape measure and proper understanding of the ordinance is all that is required. Please also note that no resident has the right to keep and raise chickens in the city. The City may allow this activity and may do so with conditions. No rights are lost by requiring police inspection. Proving that a resident has the qualifications to keep what many consider a nuisance animal is a reasonable cost for being granted the opportunity to do so. This proactive measure will help keep our city sanitary and our citizens happy. **We strongly recommend the Common Council approves this proposed amendment to the ordinance.**

Thank you for your consideration.