



## How to Change Chicken-Raising Regulations

There may be ordinances or laws against raising chickens on your property – but that doesn't mean you should give up on having chickens in your backyard. If your city, village, or township doesn't allow chicken-keeping, find out the procedure for amending or changing a law or zoning in your location.

Sometimes all you need to do is request a zoning variance. That would allow you, and only you, to keep chickens based on your particular circumstances.

In some areas, getting permission to keep chickens is just a formality; in others, it's a major battle. Some places require you to draft a proposed ordinance or zoning variation for consideration. In either case, you'll probably be required to attend a commission meeting and state your case.

Ask your city clerk, township supervisor, or other local government official whether you need to attend a planning commission meeting, other special committee meeting, or the general city commission meeting. Find out the date, time, and location of the meeting. In some areas, you need to make an appointment to speak at a meeting or bring up issues.

Be patient — some of these changes can take months of discussion and mulling over. If you don't succeed the first time, ask what you can do to change the outcome the next time. Then try again.

Come to any necessary meeting prepared and organized. Try to anticipate any questions or concerns and have good answers for them. Be prepared to compromise on some points, such as the number of birds allowed.

Ask other people in your community who seem involved in local government how things are done in your community. They may give you valuable tips on how to approach the officials who have the power to change a law or grant a variance.

If you can afford it, it may help to hire a lawyer to represent you. Most people will want to handle it on their own if they can. If you have a city commissioner or other official assigned to your neighborhood, you may want to enlist his or her help.

It helps if you can find other people in your area who would also like to keep chickens and who are willing to come to meetings to support you. Local experts such as a 4-H poultry leader, veterinarian, or agriculture teacher who can speak on the behalf of poultry-keeping could help. You can also draft a proposed law or

ordinance and get people to sign a petition in support of it.

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