

ARGUMENT AGAINST CHICKENS IN RESIDENTIAL FT. PIERCE

Dear Council Members and City Officials,

Thank you for this opportunity to be heard on this issue, the issue of legalizing chickens and coops into backyards of residential Ft. Pierce. We are the City of Ft. Pierce, not the farmland of Ft. Pierce, a point I wish to emphasize from the start.

My name is Alki Steriopoulos, and I intend to argue most vehemently against any such legislation that would make it legal to own or house chickens anywhere within city limits.

I begin with an anecdote from my own experience. My wife and I live on Sunrise Blvd., in the block just east of the roundabout. It is a mixed neighborhood of black, white, Mexican, and Haitian peoples. Sunrise Boulevard is a very busy thoroughfare and because of that busy-ness it is loud with traffic, but discouraging to crime for its high visibility and proximity to police.

One block in any direction behind us, it is a very different story. Within one block, I can show you four abandoned houses falling into the weeds awaiting the inactions of foreclosure with some nameless bank entity somewhere who-knows-where. There is one in-ground swimming pool behind me, that is filling in to become a mosquito-infested marshland. There are two free-roaming pit bulls whose owners love to challenge you with declarations that they are friendly even as they snarl at children and adults alike. And for chickens, it is ground-zero.

There was one particularly feral and vocal rooster terrorizing the neighborhood by jumping fences. This fellow didn't tell time very well. This fellow didn't announce sunrise, this fellow started his wake-up calls at 4:30 a.m. every day and didn't let up well into the day. He was particularly fond of jumping fences from an abandoned house a few yards down from me, one that had had a fire that went unreported, the city unaware of it, until I reported it to Code Enforcement when I initiated action to try to rid us of this nasty rooster. And this rooster was nasty, more than once going after the dog next door, and the little girl behind me, Maria. Maria hated to leave her house for school each morning because of the rooster's kamikaze attacks aimed at her, or my, head and face. I do not exaggerate when I say this rooster was mean. After hounding Andy in Code Enforcement, and Kenny and BJ in Animal Control, we eventually secured and baited a trap by the abandoned swimming pool behind my house. Kenny took him away to a

farm outside the city limits. A farm outside the city limits, not a hen-house two doors down.

This was a four-month long process. I should mention at this time that I work nights. Unwinding and falling asleep after work, usually gave me two good hours of sleep before it was shot through with a cockle-doodle-do outside my window. I would've gleefully wrung this bird's neck if I could've caught it, not out of malice, but out of despair and sleep-deprivation.

Now, thanks to legislation Ms. Arraiz is attempting to pass through, we are told that chickens will be invited as our neighbors. That the same folks who let their yards, dogs, and kids run rampant will suddenly become responsible law-abiding code-abiding model citizens. That will do everything to regulation. That there will be no roosters. I may be wrong about this, but aren't roosters part of where baby chickens come from? And that maybe some of those baby chickens might grow up to become roosters?

And the chickens that run around a block over at the closed day-care center at Sunrise and 6th, they will dutifully march up the road to turn themselves into a chicken coop for processing and registration. And the ones in the yard at 10th Street and Ohio, they'll do the same just as soon as the cars on blocks in the yard are moved to make room for the hen-houses? Which by the way, I can easily give you a tour in the neighborhood of single occupancy houses where there are four, six, or thirteen cars in the yard, on the grass, on blocks, or not, all in blatant code violation, awaiting enforcement in defiance of laws. The chickens are moving targets, but these cars have become part of the landscape they've been sitting so long. But I digress.

I know that Code Enforcement is grossly understaffed and underfunded and that Ms. Arraiz and her staff are asked to do an awful lot with an awful little. When I worked with Andy Avery and BJ and Kenny, they all told me they could cry with how overworked they were; this is no secret.

I must assume that Peggy means well when she proposes acquiescing to the chickens and those that would have them. If you can't beat them, join them. Well, I can tell you it didn't work with Hitler and it hasn't worked with Kim Jung Un, and it sure as hell ain't gonna work with these chickens and their non-owning owners. I don't know where Peggy lives, or who her neighbors are, but I can tell you that where I live there are two kinds of citizens. There are those that work hard, raise their kids, cut their grass, and are decent good people. And there are those that party and swear and care not one little bit what their homes and yards look like, and these, big

surprise, are where the chickens are. And these folks are not going to build or maintain their chicken coops to code when they don't do it for their own homes. They're gonna laugh at us and know they won because this city lacked the courage and resources to go after them and their chickens.

I propose that instead of surrendering to the problem, this council move to give Animal Control more traps, more agents in the field. Can feral animals be darted and moved? Can they be eradicated through environmentally safe poisons?

I have a friend in Key West who tells me that since giving in to the chickens, the chickens have exponentially increased to where driving is a hazard. You can't drive ten feet without swerving to miss one or swerving to hit one depending upon which decision is more practical in the spur-of-the-moment.

There is another, even larger concern – that of health. It is my understanding that Avian flu is carried by, and disseminated through airborne bacterium from chickens. Do any of you want to be on record as the ones that voted to introduce the plague to Ft. Pierce?

Can you imagine the smell coming from chicken feces in hen-houses in sweltering summer heat? Chickens stink, plain and simple, and wherever you good people live, I can guarantee you would not like it, and neither do I. That smell will be good for my property value, too. And when that inevitable rooster crows at 4:30 in the a.m., can I call you at home and wake you up to come enforce code on it?

And after we've made it okay for people to have chickens in my neighborhood, within city limits, do you think for one second that someone might think cock-fights are a good idea? Dog fights go on in parts of our town, why not cock fights? For that matter, chicken sacrifices play a part in certain belief systems represented culturally in my neighborhood; let's make it easier for them, too.

No, good people, it seems that it will be easier to pass the problem to me and other neighborhoods in our city than it will be for the Code Enforcers to their job; a job they're telling us they cannot do, so let's not even try, let's throw our arms up and say "I surrender. Do what you want." And dump the problem where it belongs. In the laps of the poor.

I thank you. I've made copies with my contact info. I invite you to contact me for further discussion. And I beg you, I implore you, please kill this legislation now. The fact that it is even being considered, is ludicrous, unconscionable, morally and ethically reprehensible, if not outright criminal.

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